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US & Iran reach tentative peace deal

Don says Hormuz partially open after 107 days of fighting

ISLAMABAD/ WASHINGTON, 15 JUNE

The United States and Iran have reached a tentative peace agreement after 107 days of war, with both sides expected to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in Geneva on Friday, easing fears of a prolonged conflict that rattled global energy markets.

US President Donald Trump announced on Truth Social that the deal with Iran was "complete", while Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi confirmed the signing ceremony and said Tehran's commitments would be "strictly conditional and reciprocal".

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said his country would host the signing ceremony in Switzerland on 19 June. Pakistan has emerged as a key mediator in the talks, along with Qatar, facilitating contacts between Washington and Tehran and helping secure a ceasefire in April that was extended to allow negotiations to continue.

Shehbaz was the first to publicly announce the deal

Though the full text of the agreement has not been released, Iran's Mehr news agency reported that the 14-point draft MoU provides for a permanent ceasefire, lifting of the naval blockade within 30 days, reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, suspension of sanctions on oil sales and negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme over a 60-day period.

Trump later said the Strait of Hormuz would reopen on Friday following the signing of the agreement. In another post, he said "ships are starting to move" through the strategic waterway, with many already loaded with oil and using what he described as a "totally safe, secure and pristine" southern shipping corridor.

The draft also envisages the release of USD 24 billion in frozen Iranian assets, with half to be made available before final negotiations begin. Discussions on Iran's missile pro-gramme and support for regional groups have reportedly been excluded from the talks, though these details have not been independently verified.

The US military said its blockade of Iranian ports would remain in force until the agreement is formally signed.

US Vice President JD Vance said the Strait of Hormuz was expected to reopen toll-free in the long term, subject to technical negotiations and Iran fulfilling its commitments. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 5, 6 & 7

Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei, US President Donald Trump and Pak PM Shehbaz Sharif—*WIKIPEDIA/PTI*

Israel won't withdraw from Lebanon

Israel has ruled out withdrawing from territories it holds in southern Lebanon despite an interim agreement announced between the United States and Iran, with Defence Minister Israel Katz saying the Israeli military would remain in "security zones" in Lebanon, Syria and Gaza indefinitely. Katz's remarks mark Israel's first official response to the US-Iran understanding. Iran has reportedly linked the agreement to a halt in Israeli attacks on Hezbollah in Lebanon.

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Indian ship crosses Hormuz; 1st in 3 months

Indian LNG carrier Disha has safely transited the Strait of Hormuz, becoming the first Indian-flagged LNG vessel to exit the war zone in over three months. Operated by the state-owned Shipping Corporation of India and carrying 62,370 metric tonnes of Qatari LNG for India, it is also believed to be the first vessel to cross the strait since the US-Iran peace pact was announced. Industry experts said shipping traffic remains subdued and could take weeks to recover, depending on the durability of the agreement.

I welcome the understanding reached between the United States and Iran on ending the conflict in West Asia, which has caused serious economic disruption across the world and led to loss of life in many countries. India hopes that the implementation of this understanding will help restore peace and stability in the region and ensure the freedom of navigation and commerce

—NARENDRA MODI, PRIME MINISTER

—SCREENGRAB

CJP founder slapped during Jaipur protest

JAIPUR, 15 JUNE

Cockroach Janta Party founder Abhijeet Dipke was allegedly slapped by some people while supporters carried him on their shoulders during a protest in Jaipur, police said on Monday.

Two youths have been detained and further investigation is underway.

The incident occurred at Shaheed Smarak where a large number of youths had gathered to protest over issues such as the alleged NEET paper leak and unemployment.

According to police and eyewitnesses, as Dipke arrived at the protest site and was being carried on supporters' shoulders, some youths in the crowd allegedly slapped him. Following the incident, his supporters caught hold of the accused and assaulted them before the police intervened.

During the protest, slogans were raised demanding the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

The protest was organised by the CJP over issues related to examination irregularities, paper leaks, and unemployment, among others, police said. *—PTI*

India, Slovakia ink 11 pacts including labour, defence, technology

BRATISLAVA, 15 JUNE

India and Slovakia on Monday elevated their bilateral ties to a Comprehensive Partnership and signed 11 agreements covering areas including labour migration, defence, digital technology, higher education and quantum communication.

The decision was taken following talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Slovak counterpart Robert Fico during Modi's first visit to Slovakia -- the first by an Indian Prime Minister.

The new framework aims to deepen existing cooperation mechanisms and open new avenues of engagement both bilaterally and multilaterally.

The two leaders also agreed to work towards the earliest implementation of the India-European Union Free Trade Agreement, which Modi said would benefit industries, start-ups and traders in both countries. Fico described the pact as one of the "most ambitious" trade agreements.

A Letter of Intent on defence cooperation was finalised to boost collaboration between their defence industries.

The two sides also agreed to strengthen cooperation in energy security, including nuclear and geothermal power, and identified automobiles, railways, advanced manufacturing and green technologies as key sectors for future collaboration.

India and Slovakia further reaffirmed support for open international trade, freedom of navigation and the peaceful resolution of disputes, while agreeing to facilitate the safe and legal mobility of skilled professionals and work towards an early Social Security Agreement. *—PTI*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Slovakia's Robert Fico in Bratislava, Slovakia on Monday —*PTI*

PRIYANK SEEKS RSS FUND DETAILS; MOHAN DISMISSES IT AS POLITICS

BENGALURU, 15 JUNE

Home Minister Priyank Kharge on Monday asked the RSS to register itself, disclose its legal status and finances, prompting RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat to dismiss the demand as "politics" and assert the organisation had nothing to hide.

In a two-page letter to Bhagwat, Kharge said an organisation claiming more than 60,000 shakhas and crores of swayamsevaks across India and abroad must uphold transpar-ency, accountability and constitutional compliance.

Bhagwat said, RSS works openly and is not secretive. "There are so many unregistered things going on... The Hindu religion is not registered, many things are not registered," he said.

Citing RSS' activities in Karnataka - including 4,127 daily shakhas, 1,389 weekly milans, 2,194 Samajotsavas involving 19.61 lakh participants and 562 route marches with 2.21 lakh participants -- Kharge said such a large body could not re-main outside legal oversight.

Kharge sought details of the RSS's legal status, office bearers, sources of donations and income, expenditure, assets, tax compliance and the legal basis under which it functions without registration. He also sought details of permissions for public events and marches.

At an RSS centenary event in Thrissur, Bhagwat said registration was unnecessary as the organisation neither sought government funds nor operated secretly. He added that RSS existed for a century and no authority had insisted on registration. "The government banned us twice. One ban was lifted through a court order and another after a satyagraha," he said. *—PTI*

—FB

B'desh summons India envoy as PM aide stopped

DHAKA, 15 JUNE

Bangladesh on Monday summoned India's Deputy High Commissioner and conveyed its "deep disappointment" over an incident involving an adviser of the Prime Minister at the Delhi airport, according to media reports.

Dr Zahed Ur Rahman, the Prime Minister's Adviser on Policy and Strategy Affairs, and Information and Broadcasting, was stopped by immigration authorities at New Delhi airport on Sunday when his name was reportedly flagged during a routine security check, state-run BSS news agency reported.

Foreign Minister Dr Khalilur Rahman said that the government was taking appropriate steps.

Prothom Alo newspaper reported that Zahed, who was travelling to India for the 28th Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials of the Indian Ocean Rim Association, was kept waiting for almost three hours by immigration authorities. Though Indian authorities allowed him to proceed, he decided to return home. *—PTI*

3-yr-old girl dies after rape in TN; 1 arrested

CHENNAI, 15 JUNE

A 19-year-old migrant from Bihar has been arrested for allegedly raping three-year-old girl near Gummidipoondi in Tiruvallur.

The victim, daughter of a migrant couple also hailing from Bihar, died at the Government Stanley Hospital here on Monday.

Police sources said the incident took place on Sunday night. The suspect allegedly lured the child away offering chocolates while she was playing near her residence, and subsequently assaulted her in a secluded area.

A person who saw the assault immediately raised an alarm, prompting residents to gather and apprehend the fleeing suspect. He was handed over to the police. *—PTI*

2 killed, 7 injured in Mysuru pub fire

MYSURU, 15 JUNE

Two people were killed and seven others injured after a massive fire broke out at a pub and restaurant near Netaji Circle on the Outer Ring Road at Dattagalli Fourth Stage in Mysuru on Monday.

Police said the fire, suspected to have been caused by a short circuit, engulfed the Fox Den Bar and Restaurant at around 3.15pm. More than 25 people were inside the premises when the blaze erupted, with some attempting to escape by jumping from the building.

The deceased are Sahil and Prakash, both cooks at the establishment and natives of West Bengal and Chhattisgarh respectively. The injured included the pub owner, manager and cashier. They were shifted to Suyog Hospital and other private hospitals for treatment.

- Officials said the absence of an emergency exit hampered evacuation efforts.

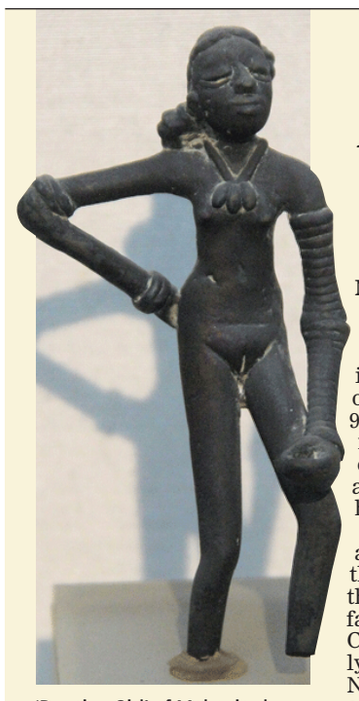
Divisional Fire Officer Rangaanath said personnel from the Saraswathipuram and Hebbal fire stations rushed to the spot with two ladder units and rescued around 15 customers and employees. The bodies of the two cooks were later recovered from the kitchen.

He said the absence of an emergency exit hampered evacuation efforts, while the fire spread rapidly as the terrace roof was covered with thatched paddy straw.

A case has been registered at Kuvempunagar police station. *—Salar News*

AFTER BACKLASH

NCERT clothes, then disrobes Mohenjodaro's 'Dancing Girl'



'Dancing Girl' of Mohenjo-daro —*WIKIPEDIA*

NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

NCERT will replace the modified image of the iconic "Dancing Girl" figurine of Mohenjo-daro in its Class 9 Arts textbook with the original version after criticism over the depiction of the artefact, which appeared to have its bare torso covered.

The controversy erupted after readers noticed that the bronze figurine, one of the most recognisable artefacts of the Indus Valley Civilisation, had been visually altered in Madhurima, NCERT's new Class 9 arts edu-cation textbook.

The image appears in the opening chapter, History of Arts. In the version carried in the textbook, shading across the figurine's upper body obscures anatomical details visible in the original sculpture.

The depiction contrasts with the image used in NCERT's Class 6 Social Science textbook, where the "Dancing Girl" appears in a form closer to the original bronze artefact.

Michel Danino, who headed the textbook development committee for NCERT's new Class 6 Social Science books, said he had been told the figurine was considered "not age-appropriate".

"The notion that nudity is inappropriate is, in my opinion, an obsolete Victorian view. Yet we speak of decolo-nising Indian education," he told PTI.

Reacting to the Class 9 image, Danino said his first response was disbelief and described the modification as one that "misrepresents the original artefact".

"If the Dancing Girl cannot figure as she is, and with proper dimensions, in a chapter on Indian art, then we have a serious problem," he said. NCERT has not commented on the variation in the figurine's representation in the two textbooks. *—PTI*

Wholesale inflation hits record high of 9.68%

NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

Wholesale price inflation shot up to a record 9.68 per cent in May, from 8.26 per cent in April, led by a sharp spike in the prices of fuel and power, reflecting the impact of energy shocks due to the West Asia war.

The May wholesale price index (WPI)-based inflation is the highest in the current series with a base year of 2022-23.

The Commerce and Industry Ministry on Monday released the May WPI-inflation data, revising the base year to 2022-23, from 2011-12 earlier, the first revision in nine years.

The total number of items in the new WPI basket has increased from 697 to 957. New sources of energy, such as solar and wind, have been added under the 'electricity' group. In addition, nuclear electricity has been included in the basket.

The ministry also released the producer price indices (PPI) for the first time to track output and input factory gate prices. Besides, Services PPI was released for seven services - Banking, Securities Transaction, Management of Pension Funds, Insurance, Railways, Air (Passenger), and Telecom.

The government intends to discontinue with WPI data in the next five years and shift to PPI, in alignment with the global best practice. *— PTI*

K'taka rolls out AI to live track govt staff

The attendance system will cover 4.7L workers

BENGALURU, 15 JUNE

Geofencing uses GPS, Wi-Fi or cellular data to create a virtual boundary around a specified location —AI

The Karnataka government has expanded Kartavya, its AI-powered, geofencing-based attendance management system, to improve transparency, accountability and efficiency in public administration.

The system, rolled out in January, gained momentum after Chief Minister DK Shivakumar directed government employees to maintain full attendance during office hours and respond promptly to public grievances.

Officials said the earlier biometric system allowed employees to mark attendance digitally and leave office premises. Kartavya, formally known as the Karnataka Advanced Attendance Management System (KAAMS), plugs this loophole by tracking employees' physical presence and location within workplaces using AI-based facial recognition and geofencing technology.

Geofencing uses GPS, Wi-Fi or cellular data to create a virtual boundary around a specified location. The system also includes an integrated employee database, mobile applications and leave management tools, enabling staff to mark attendance, apply for leave and record official out-of-office duties.

The number of registered employees increased from 2.46 lakh last week to 3,01,034 this week, while average daily attendance rose from 1.85 lakh to 2.32 lakh.

At present, 4.78 lakh employees across 42 government departments are covered under the system. Following successful pilots in the Health and Family Welfare and School Education departments, Kartavya is now being monitored daily by the Chief Minister, Chief Secretary and district officials. The platform was developed entirely within the government's ecosystem by the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms (e-Governance), the Centre for e-Governance and the Karnataka AI Cell, saving crores of rupees in vendor costs while improving data security, officials said. —*PTI*

Rotten system: Priyank on B'luru cops' arrest in R'than

BENGALURU, 15 JUNE

With media reports emerging that three police officers from Bengaluru were caught in Rajasthan while taking a bribe in a dowry harassment case, Karnataka Home Minister Priyank Kharge on Monday said they have been suspended. He also said the system is rusted and it will take time to correct it.

Reports said the Rajasthan Anti-Corruption Bureau caught three persons, one of them a woman SI attached to the HAL police station in Bengaluru, red-handed in Jaipur while allegedly accepting a bribe from an accused in a dowry harassment case.

The BJP too came down heavily on the government for failing to contain corruption in the police department. Priyank said that as soon as he learnt of it, he took up the matter, and the individuals concerned were suspended.

He conceded that the arrest did not bring honour to the state, especially when those who are supposed to protect people become exploiters themselves.

He said that bribery had become deeply entrenched in society over time.

"The CM has already instructed that if anyone harasses citizens, demands bribes or engages in corruption, people should complain directly to us," Priyank said.

- BJP too came down heavily on the government for failing to contain corruption in the police department.

He added that the government is working on a mechanism through which citizens can directly lodge complaints if police or government officials engage in such activities, harass people or engage in corruption.

At the same time, the minister asked people to see what had happened when the BJP was in power in the state. . —*PTI*

Bidadi township row: DKS labels allegations as political posturing

BENGALURU, 15 JUNE

Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Monday dismissed allegations of a "land mafia" involvement in the Bidadi township project, terming the criticism as politically motivated and misplaced.

Addressing the media, the Chief Minister emphasised that the project is aimed at urban development rather than private gain, drawing parallels to large-scale infrastructure initia-tives in neighbouring states.

"I don't want to give an answer to anyone. Now, Maharashtra is acquiring 80,000 acres to develop a new township. Telangana is developing a new township on 40,000 acres," Shiva-kumar stated.

The Chief Minister clarified that the project was not his personal initiative but a continua-tion of long-standing development plans.

"This is not a township conceived by me. It was originally notified by Kumaraswamy. Earlier, during the BJP government, around 1,000 acres were acquired and later handed over to KI-ADB."

Addressing concerns about the impact on the local farming community, Shivakumar defended the state's industrial record.

"Who developed the Bidadi Township? Who developed the Bidadi Industrial Township? Who developed the Harohalli Industrial Township? Did the farmers disappear because of those projects?" he asked.

Reiterating that the government has secured the necessary cooperation from landowners, the Chief Minister stated, "Now, the farmers have agreed. If anyone wants to play politics over the issue, they are free to do so."

Earlier in May, Shivakumar accepted a challenge from Union Minister and Janata Dal (Secular) leader HD Kumaraswamy for a public debate regarding the Bidadi township project. The Janata Dal (Secular) party opposed the development, alleging it is driven by a land ma-fia operating under political patronage.

In response, Shivakumar defended the project by stating that the initial notification was issued during Kumaraswamy's own tenure as Chief Minister and noted that the courts re-fused to halt the development. He emphasised that the government is moving forward by taking local residents into confidence and providing higher compensation. —*ANI*

Karnataka Cong plans awareness meeting on SIR

BENGALURU, 15 JUNE
The KPCC has convened a large-scale awareness meeting to present the party's views on the SIR of electoral rolls, according to a party circular. The Election Commission has already started the special summary revision of voter lists. From 30 June, BLOs will conduct door-to-door visits and distribute enumeration forms to voters, collect voter details, and submit them to the Election Commission.
The letter states that the Congress have historically upheld democratic traditions, development, and especially the Constitution. However, it alleges that the NDA government has influenced the ECI to misuse the institution for its own convenience and the party's victory—*ANI*

M'luru Airport commissions lighting system

MANGALURU, 15 JUNE
Adani Enterprises Limited announced that Mangaluru International Airport has successfully commissioned the PAL Category-I system for Runway 24, following DGCA approval. The new system enhances safety and precision during critical landings, especially in reduced visibility on this tabletop facility. MgIAL stated that the system provides pilots with improved visual guidance and features Airfield Lighting Intelligent Management Systems (ALIMS) mounted on towers extending 900 metres from the runway. Most towers are taller than the Qutub Minar, highlighting engineering complexity. MgIAL noted this is only the second such facility in Asia and one of India's most unique airfield lighting installations. The project was completed with zero accidents, reinforcing safety standards —*PTI*

GUARANTEE SCHEMES WILL CONTINUE EVEN AFTER NEXT POLLS, SAYS SIDDARAMAIAH

BENGALURU, 15 JUNE

Former chief minister Siddaramaiah on Monday dismissed opposition claims that Karnataka's five guarantee schemes would be discontinued, asserting the Congress-implemented programmes would continue even after the party returns to power following the next Assembly election.

Taking to social media, Siddaramaiah assured beneficiaries that "the five guarantee schemes will not be discontinued for any reason. Not only for the next two years, but even after the next election, when we return to power, these schemes will continue," he said.

He further urged beneficiaries not to heed what he described as misinformation spread by opposition parties, which he termed "anti-poor."

The former chief minister alleged that the BJP had opposed the guarantee schemes from the outset — first arguing they were impossible to implement, then warning they would bankrupt the government, and now spreading rumours of discontinuation. —*PTI*

CM urged to plug loopholes in guarantees

BENGALURU, 15 JUNE

A letter written by Karnataka Guarantee Implementation Authority vice-chairman **Dinesh Gooligowda** to Chief Minister DK Shivakumar has sparked a fresh debate on loopholes and beneficiary verification in two welfare schemes — Gruha Lakshmi and Gruha Jyothi.

Gooligowda urged the government to review the schemes after identifying a large number of potentially ineligible beneficiaries. According to data cited in the letter, 1.24 crore women currently receive Rs 2,000 every month under Gruha Lakshmi, costing the state Rs 2,480 crore a month and Rs 29,760 crore annually. So far, the government has disbursed Rs 72,253 crore, while total spending under all five guarantee schemes has crossed Rs 1.38 lakh crore.

The letter points out that 1,95,224 Gruha Lakshmi beneficiaries died as of March 2026, but payments may still be continuing in some cases. Stopping such payments could save the government Rs 39.05 crore every month and Rs 468.54 crore annually. It also notes that 1,94,560 beneficiaries are Income Tax or GST payers, raising questions about their eligibility. Payments to this group amount to nearly Rs 39 crore a month and Rs 466.94 crore a year.

- The letter points out that 1,95,224 Gruha Lakshmi beneficiaries died as of March 2026, but payments may still be continuing in some cases. Stopping such payments could save the government Rs 39.05 crore every month and Rs 468.54 crore annually.

Gooligowda has recommended maintaining village- and ward-level death records, assigning departments responsibility for tracking deceased beneficiaries, and directing banks to recover benefits credited after a beneficiary's death. He has also suggested introducing biometric authentication for Gruha Lakshmi beneficiaries.

The letter further flags alleged misuse of the Gruha Jyothi scheme, under which 1.64 crore consumers receive free electricity of up to 200 units. Complaints have reportedly emerged that some beneficiaries are availing the subsidy for commercial electricity connections.

The recommendations come amid the government's ongoing beneficiary verification exercise aimed at plugging leakages and ensuring welfare benefits reach eligible recipients. —*Salar News*

Tejasvi starts campaign to get Bengaluru minister

BENGALURU, 15 JUNE

Bengaluru South Member of Parliament (MP) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) politician Tejasvi Surya on Monday demanded that the Karnataka Government appoint a fully empowered Bengaluru Development Minister to properly address and resolve its infrastructure and civic challenges. He said that his office would remind the Chief Minister of this every day via social media until it is accomplished.

Surya added that the Chief Minister wanting "to retain personal control" over the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) and Bengaluru Metropolitan Region Development Authority (BMRDA), while giving Krishna Byre Gowda, the Bengaluru in-charge minister, control over the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) and five "non-operational" corporations, is "strange," especially as Bengaluru is facing infrastructure issues such as flooding, compound wall collapses, worsening road conditions and delays in major projects such as Metro corridors.

He also called the "governance paralysis" a result of an internal political and administrative "turf war," resulting in a lack of accountability and administrative clarity. LoP Ashoka seeks CBI probe into waste tender

Meanwhile, Leader of Opposition in the Karnataka Assembly and BJP politician R Ashoka on Monday alleged that the state government's proposed solid waste management tender worth Rs 39,437 crore would impose a long-term financial burden on Bengaluru residents. He demanded a CBI probe. —*Salar News*

Woman murders man after he sexually harasses her for a yr

BALLARI, 15 JUNE

A 26-year-old medical laboratory worker from Ballari was allegedly murdered by a woman who had been sexually harassed by him for nearly a year, say police sources.

Patil Basavanagouda's partially burnt body was found near the Shivapura–Tambrahalli LLC canal on 8 June. Police launched an investigation after registering a First Information Report (FIR) based on a complaint filed by his maternal uncle Hampanagouda at Moka Police Station.

Both the police and the youth's family initially suspected a love affair gone wrong.

However, the investigation later revealed that the crime was allegedly committed because of Basavanagouda's inappropriate behaviour. The target of the harassment was allegedly assisted by her husband and brother in carrying out the crime.

On looking into his online messages, police found that he had sent obscene and inappropriate messages to several women, including one named Shwetha, who was related to him by marriage.

Officials also discovered that she, her husband Doddabasavana gouda, and her brother Vijay had been near the crime scene on the day of the murder and had switched their phones off.

When the trio was detained and questioned by the police, the details of the crime allegedly came to light. Shwetha had lured Basavanagouda to the spot where Doddabasavanagouda and Vijay strangled him with a rope, later setting his body ablaze in order to destroy evidence.

Police said the case bears striking similarities to the murder of Renukaswamy, a case that shook Bengaluru two years ago, in which actor Darshan Thoogudeepa is an accused. —*Salar News*

Author & Gauri Lankesh's mom Indira Lankesh dies

BENGALURU, 15 JUNE

Writer and entrepreneur Indira Lankesh, mother of assassinated journalist Gauri Lankesh and wife of famed Kannada writer and journalist P Lankesh, died on Monday at her Bengaluru residence due to age-related illnesses, reports say. She was 83.

Lankesh was born on 2 June, 1943, in Shivamogga. She married P Lankesh in 1960, later sup-porting his artistic ventures and their family through a successful sari business called Mayur Silks and Textiles.

She was also primary figure in the campaign for justice for Gauri, her eldest daughter. Gauri Lankesh was shot dead at the age of 55 on 5 September, 2017 allegedly due to her vocal criti-cism of Hindutva, communalism and casteism.

The murder was reportedly carried out by members of right-wing Hindutva extremist groups.

Seventeen of the accused in the case are currently out on bail. The trial is still pending nearly nine years after the murder.

Lankesh remained an outspoken critic of communalism, joining the 2022 Bharat Jodo Yatra led by Congress politician Rahul Gandhi.

Prominent political leaders and activists paid tribute to her, including former chief minister Siddaramaiah and Chief Minister D. Shivakumar.

Activist and journalist Teesta Setalvad said that justice for Gauri will be ensured, as Indira had fought for.

Indira is survived by her daughter Kavita Lankesh, son Indrajith Lankesh, and their families. —*Salar News*

PRODUCTION FALLS 50%

Health drive halves tobacco cultivation in Belagavi

HIREKOP RAJAN SAMUEL

BELAGAVI, 15 JUNE

Awareness campaigns conducted by the health department and the Karnataka government regarding the harmful effects of tobacco consumption on health have yielded significant results, with tobacco cultivation in Belagavi district declining by nearly 50 per cent. Meanwhile, sugarcane farming continues to expand in the district, fuelled by demand for sugar and its by-products.

Once known as the "bowl of tobacco" for being one of the country's largest tobacco-growing regions, Belagavi had around 8,400 hectares under tobacco cultivation in 2023 and is also home to several gutka manufacturing units that depend heavily on tobacco.

According to the latest official records, this area has now reduced to approximately 4,800 hectares as nearly 80 percent of farmers have shifted to alternative commercial crops such as sugarcane.

"The positive response from farmers has strengthened the confidence of our advisory and awareness campaign teams," said Sahadev Yaragoppa, Deputy Director of Agriculture, Chikkodi.

This comes as the area under sugarcane cultivation has been increasing steadily every year, despite recurring disputes between sugar factories and farmers over pricing and pending payments.

Agriculture Department officials say sugarcane carries lower risks than many other more profit-making crops, which experience rising input costs, labour shortages and pricing uncertainties. There is also sustained demand for sugar and its by-products, such as biofuel.

Belagavi district has 28 sugar factories, producing approximately 2.6 crore metric tonnes of sugar annually. The area under sugarcane cultivation is expected to exceed 3 lakh hectares during 2026-27.

"Notably, 44 percent of Karnataka's total sugarcane cultivation area is located in Belagavi district alone," Yaragoppa said, adding that Belagavi has transformed from a "bowl of tobacco" into a "plate of sugarcane." — *Salar News*

TMC REBELS TO CLAIM PARTY SYMBOL

Rebels say they haven't left TMC; Mamata Banerjee's TMC cites anti-defection law

NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

Rebel Trinamool Congress MP Arup Chakraborty on Monday said the breakaway faction is trying to "rectify" the party, and would fight for the control of its election symbol. This comes even as the Mamata Banerjee-led outfit termed the move illegal under the anti-defection law.

On Sunday, 20 rebel Trinamool Congress (TMC) MPs met Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and announced that they were merging with the Nationalist Citizens Party of India (NCPI), a Tripura-based registered unrecognised political party.

"We have not left TMC; we're in TMC and trying to rectify the party. Why did it get damaged, that is not being discussed. We will fight for the party symbol; we have 20 members, why should we not fight for the symbol," Chakraborty told PTI Videos.

"A new game has started... 'Khela Hobe'," he added, claiming that the move would bring development and employment to West Bengal.

Attacking the TMC chief, Chakraborty said, "Mamata Banerjee is scared; she can't even call a meeting of the party. She could not even hold a meeting in her constituency before the election."

TMC MP Arup Chakraborty arrives at Union Minister Bhupender Yadav's residence in New Delhi on Sunday —PTI

Chakraborty also said that Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar and Sudip Bandyopadhyay were the "leaders" of their group.

TMC Rajya Sabha MP Sagarika Ghose in a post on X said, "It is the party outside Parliament (not the party representatives sitting inside Parliament) which must first split or merge, and then after this condition, the people inside do not attract the anti-defection law if 2/3rds choose to break away."

During their meeting with Birla on Sunday, the rebel MPs also sought a separate seating arrangement in Parliament, as TMC parliamentary party leader Abhishek urged the Speaker not to accord any recognition to the breakaway faction.

The NCPI is a Tripura-based registered unrecognised party that does not enjoy any significant political presence.

Recently, 64 of the party's 80 TMC MLAs broke away and secured recognition as a separate formation, with Ritabrata Banerjee as the leader of opposition. —PTI

ABHISHEK'S CLOSE AIDE TO BE ARRESTED IN LAND SCAM CASE

KOLKATA, 15 JUNE

A court in West Bengal's Paschim Medinipur district issued an arrest warrant on Monday against Sumit Roy, a close aide of TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee, in connection with a land scam case, police said.

The warrant was issued after investigators informed the court that Roy could not be traced despite repeated attempts.

Roy approached the Calcutta High Court on Monday, seeking anticipatory bail. His counsel said the plea is likely to come up for hearing later this week.

Investigators said Roy's name surfaced during the interrogation of former Medinipur MLA Sujoy Hazra, who was arrested earlier in the land scam case.

TMC MP Abhishek appears before ED

Sleuths of the Enforcement Directorate on Monday began interrogating TMC National General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee in the alleged primary school recruitment scam.

TMC General Secretary Abhishek arrives at the ED office in connection with the school jobs scam case in Kolkata on Monday—PTI

The questioning took place a day after Banerjee had a similar session for nearly eight and a half hours with the state CID regarding the forgery of MLAs' signatures on documents related to the appointment of the Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly.

The official said the federal probe agency has listed two dozen questions for the TMC's Diamond Harbour MP.

They will also confront Banerjee with financial documents, digital records and statements from other accused persons to trace the alleged proceeds of crime, he added. —PTI

Centre clears Rs 8,500 cr for WB's VB-G RAM G

KOLKATA, 15 JUNE

West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Monday said the Centre has allocated Rs 8,500 crore to the state under the VB-G RAM G scheme.

West Bengal has been allocated Rs 8,508 crore under the scheme for the 2026-27 financial year, the second-highest among all states after Uttar Pradesh, which has been earmarked Rs 9,721.48 crore, according to figures released by the Union government.

Under the Gram Sadak Yojana, allocations worth Rs 2,400 crore have been approved and Rs 1,000 crore released by the Centre, he said.

"The Centre has allocated around Rs 8,500 crore for West Bengal under the scheme, which will ensure 125 days of employment for rural families," the chief minister said, while launching the 'Jan Kalyan Shivir' programme from Nandigram in Purba Medinipur district.

Adhikari said 1,100 'Jan Kalyan Shivir' camps, being organised from 15 June to 17 June, will help people access 54 Central and state government schemes.

The CM welfare should not reach illegals and questioned extending benefits to families that do not send their children to recognised schools, or to institutions where 'Vande Mataram' is not sung. — PTI

UK nabs Indian in raid on Russian tanker

LONDON, 15 JUNE

An Indian man was arrested by UK authorities in connection with the alleged violation of Western sanctions on Russia.

The arrest was made during a joint operation between the UK's National Crime Agency (NCA) and the British armed forces to intercept a Russian shadow fleet oil tanker, the SMYRTOS, in the English Channel.

The enforcement action over the weekend is said to have taken place in international waters in accordance with domestic and international law.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer confirmed on Sunday that the vessel was boarded by Royal Marine Commandos and specially trained law enforcement officers in the first UK-led operation of its kind.

The UK's National Crime Agency did not clarify the specific offences for which the Indian national was arrested—PTI

The NCA did not clarify the specific offences for which the Indian national was arrested.

"He has been taken into custody where he will be interviewed by NCA investigators," an NCA spokesperson said.

According to the UK crime agency, 24 Indian and Georgian Indian crew members remain on board the vessel and are "assisting with the investigation." —PTI

Cong slams Modi's Israel policy, calls for balance

NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

The Congress on Monday criticised the Modi government's handling of foreign policy, stating that Pakistan has gained new regional and global influence, with China deeply embedded in Pakistan's strategic setup, creating a significant geopolitical challenge for India.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh welcomed the upcoming US-Iran agreement set for June 19 in Geneva to halt West Asia hostilities

He claimed Pakistan, isolated after the 2008 terror attacks, now holds increased influence, especially with China's strategic embedment, posing a formidable challenge.

Ramesh also criticised Modi's unwavering support for Israel, stating, "Our national interest demands greater balance than Mr. Modi has shown."

Pawan Khera criticised India's diplomatic efforts, saying the Iran-US peace deal, facilitated by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey, arrived after immense suffering. —PTI

Shinde omitted from Mumbai event invite

THANE, 15 JUNE

The omission of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister and Shiv Sena leader Eknath Shinde's name from official Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation invitation cards sparked protests by Shiv Sena workers, who waved black flags at BJP minister Ganesh Naik, Shinde's political rival. BJP MLA from Belapur, Manda Mhatre, claimed the altered invitation falsely credited Ganesh Naik by stating the projects were funded through his ministerial allocations.

The controversy began on Monday when it was found that Shinde's name was missing from invitations for the event. Shiv Sena workers, angered by what they saw as an "insult", displayed black flags at Naik and shouted slogans praising Shinde outside the venue, which was hosting the launch of new civic health facilities.

Thane Lok Sabha MP Naresh Mhaske alleged the omission was deliberate. He said the Navi Mumbai Corporation Commissioner had confirmed that Shinde's name was initially included, but the Mayor's office later overruled this, circulating a revised invitation, citing civic chief.

Ganesh Naik's BJP holds the mayoralty of Navi Mumbai, a stronghold of Naik's rival, Shinde. —PTI

— PTI

BJP accuses Cong of hypocrisy over RSS event

NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

The BJP criticised Keralam Chief Minister VD Satheesan for condemning three vice-chancellors attending an RSS centenary event, accusing Congress of hypocrisy. Shehzad Poonawalla stated, "The Congress objects to vice-chancellors supporting a nationalist organisation but supports groups like the Muslim League, Jamaat, and SDPI." He argued that Congress, under Muslim League influence in Kerala, targets nationalists while ignoring radical groups. Poonawalla added, "There is no ban on vice-chancellors attending RSS events. The Madhya Pradesh High Court has lifted restrictions, calling RSS one of the most nationalist organisations." Satheesan called the vice-chancellors' attendance a "grave lapse," demanding they apologise for undermining Keralam's educational dignity.—PTI

ED quizzes CMRL MD's daughter in PMLA case

KOCHI, 16 JUNE

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) questioned Shiiby Kartha, daughter of CMRL Managing Director Sasidharan Kartha, in connection with a money laundering case involving the firm and former Keralam Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's daughter, Veena T. She appeared at the ED office in Kochi around 11am. Shiby is a director of Nipuna International Private Limited, linked to Cochin Minerals and Rutile Limited (CMRL). Notices were also served on Sasidharan Kartha and his son Saran S Kartha. The ED alleges CMRL paid Rs 2.78 crore to Veena Vijayan's company without receiving services. The agency also probes loans of Rs 50 lakh extended by EICPL, operated by Sasidharan Kartha, which allegedly generated proceeds of crime.—PTI

VIOLENCE IN DEHRADUN VILLAGE

1 MORE HELD FOR BJP MAN'S MURDER

DEHRADUN, 15 JUNE

Police on Monday arrested another accused in the murder of a BJP worker here. An FIR was also registered against 100 to 150 unidentified rioters over large-scale violence, arson and stone-pelting following the killing, officials said.

Imtiaz, 58, a resident of Lakhanwala, was arrested for the murder of BJP functionary Vinod Kumar, 44, on Saturday evening, taking the total number of arrests to five.

Violence erupted in Bairagiwala village on Sunday morning, which allegedly targeted police personnel and properties of the accused.

According to the FIR, when police arrived to investigate the murder, they saw a crowd of 100 to 150 people at the house of the deceased.

District administration and police tried to pacify the crowd. However, unidentified miscreants grew aggressive, started raising slogans and demanded public punishment for the murder accused. —PTI

Ankita Bhandari case: Ex-BJP MLA arrested for naming 'VIP'

DEHRADUN/HARIDWAR, 15 JUNE

Former BJP MLA Suresh Rathore was arrested over a viral audio-video clip related to the alleged naming of a 'VIP' in the Ankita Bhandari murder case, police said on Monday.

Superintendent of Police (City) Pramod Kumar told PTI that Rathore was detained from his office in Buggawala, Haridwar, and brought to Dehradun.

The development follows a press conference held by Rathore three days ago, where he stated that the Uttarakhand High Court has quashed two of the four FIRs registered against him. The FIRs had been filed against Rathore over the alleged circulation of objectionable audio and video clips.

The Uttarakhand High Court on 4 June quashed two of the four FIRs filed against Rathore in the case. A single-judge bench of Justice Rakesh Thapliyal, however, allowed the police investigation to continue in the remaining two FIRs.

Former BJP MLA Suresh Rathore who was arrested and the murder victim Ankita Bhandari—PTI

- Superintendent of Police (City) Pramod Kumar told PTI that Suresh Rathore was detained from his office

The complainants, Dushyant Gautam and Aarti Gaur, countered that the circulated material was deliberately aimed at tarnishing their reputation.

Gautam, BJP national general secretary and Uttarakhand in-charge, was allegedly identified by Rathore as the "VIP" in the clips made public in connection with the case.

Ankita Bhandari, a 19-year-old receptionist at a resort in Pauri district, went missing and was found dead in September 2022. The incident triggered widespread protests across Uttarakhand, leading to the arrest of three people, including the resort owner, who were subsequently convicted for her murder. —PTI

SOCIAL WELFARE SCHEME

Keralam women, trans get free bus rides

T'PURAM, 15 JUNE

The Congress-led UDF government on Monday rolled out the free bus travel for women scheme, with Chief Minister VD Satheesan calling it a "decisive step" to build a new Kerala.

The Opposition CPI(M) boycotted the launch claiming the rollout was confined only to ordinary KSRTC services, while the BJP staged protests alleging the UDF did not implement its promise in toto.

With the launch of the 'Priyadarshini' scheme, Keralam joined other southern states, including Congress-ruled Karnataka and Telangana, to offer free bus rides for women. Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu also extend similar sops to women.

Satheesan inaugurated the scheme at the KSRTC bus terminal in Thampanoor here and described it as a proud moment for the government.

CM Satheesan, right, with KSRTC Minister John on Monday at the launch of 'Priyadarshini', a free bus travel scheme for women at T'puram —PTI

The initiative will cover women and transgenders.

Inaugurating the initiative by lighting a lamp at the depot, the CM said it was not an act of charity but a welfare measure.

Satheesan said the government would provide around Rs 800 crore annually to KSRTC for implementing the scheme.

Recalling an interaction with a beneficiary, the CM said a woman had asked him what she should do with the money saved, and he advised her to invest it in a savings scheme.

He also said the government had plans to strengthen the private transport sector.

Transport Minister CP John said the government's objective is make public transport more accessible.

Following the inauguration, the chief minister and his cabinet colleagues travelled in a KSRTC bus from Thampanoor to the Secretariat along with women passengers. — PTI

'Centre issued notice to Waqf on Munambam'

T'PURAM, 15 JUNE

BJP's Kerala state president Rajeev Chandrasekhar said on Monday that the Union Ministry of Minority Affairs has issued a notice to the State Waqf Board over the registration of the disputed Munambam land on the UMEED portal.

Chandrasekhar said he had submitted a complaint to Union Minister for Minority Affairs Kiren Rijiju, alleging that the Kerala Waqf Board had unilaterally uploaded details of several properties, including the 404-acre disputed land at Munambam, on the UMEED portal.

He said the law authorises only the concerned Mutawalli to upload such records on the portal.

He said the authority rests with Farook College and alleged that the Waqf Board's action was illegal.

He said the Centre's decision to seek an explanation came after his representation and reflected the seriousness with which it viewed the complaints of Munambam residents. He argued that uploading the disputed land on the UMEED portal while ownership issues remain pending before legal forums raises serious legal concerns.

The Nemom MLA also said the BJP would intervene in all Waqf-related land disputes in Kerala, including in Thaliparamba, and vowed to protect the interests of the rightful landowners. — PTI

Travellers stuck for hours in HP's weekend jam

SHIMLA, 15 JUNE

Heavy traffic congestion over the weekend caused hours-long delays on key Himachal routes, forcing tourists to abandon plans. The 22-kilometre Khajjiar-Dalhousie route saw long queues, particularly at Lakarmandi pass, where hundreds waited hours. Tourists from Bihar and Banaras questioned the rationale behind fees when traffic was poorly managed. Vasundhra, a Bihar tourist, said, "We have spent so much money on this trip, but there are no toilets or water, and police are only now regulating traffic." Locals highlighted rising vehicle numbers during tourist season without adequate facilities, leading to frequent jams. The worsening gridlock impacts emergency services and businesses, with calls for long-term traffic solutions and better parking facilities. —*PTI*

— *PTI*

Four Assam products get GI tag: Himanta

GUWAHATI, 15 JUNE

Four products from Assam – Bihu Pepa, a traditional musical instrument, Bah Silpa (bamboo products) and Karbi Anglong and Deori handloom products – have received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Monday. "This certification will ensure that the producers related to it will get the right value for the products and only the authentic products are in the markets," he added. —*PTI*

— *PTI*

Foo fighters to perform in B'luru, Mumbai in Jan

NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

US rock band Foo Fighters will perform in India for the first time in January 2027, with shows in Bengaluru on 29 January and Mumbai's Mahalaxmi Racecourse on 31 January. Formed in 1994 by Dave Grohl, the band will play alongside Nate Mendel, Pat Smear, Chris Shiflett, Rami Jaffee, and Ilan Rubin. Their latest album, "Your Favorite Toy," was released in April and has been praised as a high-energy return to their roots. Grohl said, "After 31 years as a band, we can't wait to finally play for our fans in India! It's taken a few years but we promise it'll be worth the wait." Naman Pugalia of BookMyShow highlighted their legacy and the significance of their India debut, promising an unforgettable rock experience. —*PTI*

RTI activism has become biz: SC bins bail plea

Activist accused of blocking road construction in Punjab

NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

The Supreme Court said that RTI activism has become a new business while refusing anticipatory bail to an activist and another accused of obstructing a public servant in road construction work.

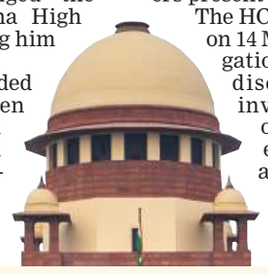
Justices Sandeep Mehta and Vijay Bishnoi denied bail to RTI activist Rakesh Kumar Behl and his aide on Monday, and questioned their authority to monitor road construction.

Justice Mehta said, "RTI activism has become a new business. The Centre has issued funds, it will take care of the road construction. You are nobody. So-called RTI activist! Yellow journalism. Dismissed."

Concurring with the views of Justice Mehta, Justice Bishnoi said, "Who are you to monitor the construction of these roads? Are you some superior authority or what?"

Behl has challenged the Punjab and Haryana High Court's order denying him anticipatory bail.

His counsel contended that they had been falsely implicated in the case as they had highlighted the corruption involved in the road construction.



The FIR said Behl and another accused Rajiv Kumar alias Mintu allegedly obstructed road construction in Batala in the Gurdaspur district of Punjab and also intimated the complainant under whose supervision the work was being executed and the labourers present at the site.

The HC said in its order on 14 May that the allegations in the FIR disclose direct involvement in obstructing government work and refused to grant them anticipatory bail. — *PTI*

SC issues notice to Centre, Punjab on RTE plea

NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

The Supreme Court on Monday sought responses from the Centre and the Punjab government on a plea alleging non-implementation of the RTE Act, 2009, in the state.

The plea has sought a direction to the Centre to ensure compliance with the Act, including the one relating to admitting at least 25 per cent children belonging to the weaker sections in Class 1 in private schools, by the Punjab government.

The bench referred to an affidavit filed by the state which had said that over 450 poor students were admitted in private schools.

The petitioner said the number should have been around 50,000 as two lakh students are admitted every year in class 1 in Punjab. — *PTI*

Weather experts attributed the dust storm to a western disturbance currently affecting the Himalayan region—*ANI*

Dust storm, gusty winds hit Delhi

NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

- A dust storm swept across parts of New Delhi, prompting the IMD to issue a red alert

The weather in Delhi suddenly changed on Monday afternoon as a dust storm accompanied by strong winds swept across parts of the city, prompting the IMD to issue a red alert for thunderstorms and rain.

The IMD said a dust storm followed by a thunderstorm with light to moderate rains, lightning and gusty winds reaching 70-90 kmph was likely across the national capital. Palam recorded wind speeds of 50 knots (92 kmph) at 2.30 pm.

Light to moderate rainfall accompanied by lightning and strong winds of 60-70 kmph, gusting up to 80 kmph, is expected in the city.

Weather experts attributed the sudden change to a western disturbance currently affecting the Himalayan region. They said its impact is likely to weaken from Tuesday, after which temperatures are expected to rise again.

The city also received light rainfall during the morning hours. — *PTI*

PROCEEDINGS IN HCs ON PLEAS AGAINST TRANSGENDER LAW STAYED

NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

The SC on Monday stayed proceedings before high courts on petitions challenging the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026.

CJI Surya Kant and Justice V Mohana agreed to hear the Centre's petition seeking to transfer all pleas challenging the Act from HCs to the SC. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, told the bench that the issue ia about the constitutional validity of a Central Act. The SG said that since HCs are looking into the matter, there was a risk of conflicting rulings. The primary contention is the removal of the concept of "self-identification" of gender, a right upheld by the SC in its NALSA order. — *PTI*

Farmer beaten, run over by tractor

AMBIKAPUR, 15 JUNE

A 60-year-old farmer was allegedly beaten with sticks and run over by a tractor during a dispute over a field in Chhattisgarh's Surguja district, leading to his death, police said on Monday.

The incident occurred on Sunday in Pathrai village in Batoli Police Station limits, following which all the eight suspects, including two women, were arrested, a police official said.

The main suspect, Bajrang Paikra of Pathrai village, and is a relative of the victim. Another suspect, Hosram Paikra, is a resident of Silma village, he said.

The dispute centred around 6.30 acres of farmland owned by Kameshwari, a childless woman who was the wife of the elder brother of Hosram's father. Hosram had been taking care of Kameshwari and claimed rights over the land through a will. However, Bajrang's family also staked claim to the property.

The matter reached the revenue court, which initially ruled in favour of Hosram.

The rivals later challenged the order in the SDM court, which overturned the earlier decision, he said. Bajrang's family had gone to the disputed field on Sunday to plough when Hosram, accompanied by his relatives, came there and a clash ocurred. The suspects assaulted Hosram with sticks, and after he fell to the ground, ran a tractor over him. — *PTI*

Loco pilot didn't see victims due to curve

MORENA, 15 JUNE

A day after four passengers were run over by a train after disembarking in Madhya Pradesh's Morena, officials on Monday said the loco pilot and the victims failed to see each other due to a blind curve on the rail route.

A 4-year-old boy and three women were killed when they jumped off the Khajuraho-Udaipur Intercity Express in panic after a false fire alarm and emergency chain pulling and were run over by the Patalkot Express on the adjacent tracks on Sunday.

"There is a big curve. The passengers standing on the adjacent track and the loco pilot of the approaching train could not see each other," NCR's Jhansi Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Anirudh Kumar said.

Kumar rushed to the spot to study the scene on Sunday, and ordered a probe by the senior divisional safety officer.

Kumar said the incident was triggered by rumours of a fire in the Khajuraho-Udaipur Intercity Express (19665), following which passengers pulled the emergency chain and the train came to a halt. Four passengers, three women and a four-year-old boy, got off the train in panic and moved onto an adjacent track, where they were hit by the Patalkot Express (20424), he said. — *PTI*

Police recover bodies after 3 women and a boy were killed when they jumped off a train due to a fire scare and were run over —*PTI*

'I saw my wife and son being run over'

MORENA, 15 JUNE

A man, who lost his wife and 4-year-old son in the Morena rail tragedy said on Monday that panic over a fire spread suddenly. Passengers jumped off and another train ran over my family, he said.

"A few moments ago, my wife and son were with me, and then they were gone," Nadeem Khan said. He recalled scenes of chaos after the accident, with passengers screaming for their relatives.

"Someone shouted fire and people began jumping off. Before I understood what was happening another train ran over my wife and son," Khan, a resident of Agra, said.

"Later, we came to know that there had been no fire and it was only a rumour," Nadeem added. — *PTI*

Odisha teenager stops her child marriage with helpline call

PHULBANI, 15 JUNE

A 17-year-old girl from Kandhamal district in Odisha prevented her own child marriage by calling the district child helpline after her parents failed to heed her objections and marry her to a middle aged person. The girl, a Class 11 student, had run away to her aunt's house to escape her parents' plans to marry her off to a 40-year-old man.

Despite her efforts, her parents continued to pressure her for marriage at her aunt's residence, prompting her to seek urgent protection by dialling helpline 1098, explained Shiv Shankar Behera, a member of the Kandhamal district childline.

The girl, a Class 11 student, had run away to her aunt's house to escape her parents' plans to marry her off to a 40-year-old man—*AI*

Once the call was received, authorities contacted Sarangagarh police, who rescued her from her aunt's house. She was initially taken to a local One-Stop Centre for safe shelter and counselling, before being handed over to the Child Welfare Committee.

Behera praised her bravery, stating, "She is a meritorious student and wanted to study further. We thank the girl for showing extraordinary courage." — *PTI*

Khan Sir got my bro killed, says rival

PATNA, 15 JUNE

Patna-based tutor Faisal Khan, known as Khan Sir, was on Monday accused by his rival Raushan Anand of having orchestrated the "murder" of his brother Prince Yadav, who died under mysterious circumstances in Nepal.

Anand made the sensational claim after being released on bail in connection with the vandalism that took place at one of the coaching centres run by Khan earlier this month.

"Patna police arrested me on the basis of a false complaint by Khan. While I was in jail, he got my brother murdered. I seek justice for Prince," Anand told reporters.

Some reports said that Yadav had "escaped" to Nepal, fearing arrest in connection with the attack on Khan's premises, and was found dead at a Biratnagar hotel.

Some other reports suggested that Yadav was wounded in the firing by Khan's bodyguards here on 3 June, and he later died at a hospital in Biratnagar, 300 km away, where his aides had rushed him fearing retribution from his brother's rival.

Khan, who could not be traced after an FIR was lodged against him based on the statement of one of his injured bodyguards that they had opened fire under pressure from their boss, came out with a video message debunking the allegations.

But Anand insisted that Khan should be asked to undergo a "narco test," to ascertain culpability. — *PTI*

Students gather near the Khan Global Studies (KGS) coaching institute in Patna on Monday. (Insert) Raushan Anand—*PTI*

'Kumkum Bhagya' actor Sanchita dies by suicide

PALGHAR, 15 JUNE

Television actress Sanchita Ugale, known for her roles in 'Kumkum Bhagya' and 'Wagle Ki Duniya,' allegedly committed suicide at her home in Maharashtra's Palghar district. She was 22. Ugale reportedly hanged herself from a ceiling fan in Nallasopara on Sunday. An official said, "A police team inspected the scene immediately. Nothing suspicious was found, and no suicide note was recovered." Her father told Achole police he did not suspect foul play.

The police have sent her body for autopsy.

Ugale played Diya Tandon in 'Kumkum Bhagya,' a role that brought her recognition. She also acted in 'Wagle Ki Duniya - Nayi Peedhi Naye Kisse,' and starred in 'Dilwali Dulha Le Jayegi.'

She had also acted in the feature films 'Chhaava' and 'Silence 2.'

FAMILY SUICIDE

Meanwhile, in Andhra Pradesh, committed suicide in Duvvuru in Nellore district, due to their son's unemployment. Madhusudhan, 65, wife Ratnavali, 56, and son Sai Samrath, 26 were found dead at their home. —*PTI*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support

HISTORIC MOMENT

Jewar farmers who gave land for Noida Airport board first flight

NOIDA/LUCKNOW, 15 JUNE

Around 170 farmers from Jewar whose land was acquired for the Noida International Airport became part of a historic moment on Monday as they boarded one of the first passenger flights from the greenfield airport to Lucknow.

Almost all of them were travelling by air for the first time, Jewar MLA Dhirendra Singh said.

The passengers met Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow around noon.

A special PA by IndiGo crew greeted the villagers hailing their role in the making of the greenfield project.

The group included several elderly farmers and women from villages in the Jewar region of Gautam Buddh Nagar district. The airport was built on land that was once used for farming.

Farmers hold boarding passes after arriving at Noida International Airport from Lucknow, in Jewar, Uttar Pradesh, Monday —*PTI*

Earlier in the day, several passengers shared their emotions before boarding the flight. "We are delighted to travel on the first flight from Noida International Airport to Lucknow," passenger Abrar Khan said. Another passenger, Hera Rashid, a young woman, described the occasion as historic.

PM Modi laid the foundation stone for the project on 25 November 2021 and inaugurated it on 28 March. —*PTI*

The CBI team at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital. The team visted the college to have a look at the crime spot—*PTI*

CBI team visits RG Kar to review rape case

KOLKATA, 15 JUNE

A six-man team of CBI officers reached the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital here on Monday for a probe into the rape and murder of a trainee doctor at the facility in 2024. "They are supposed to meet the principal, medical superintendent, and vice principal. They are likely to visit the spot in the hospital where the crime took place," an official said.

The young medic was raped and murdered in the hospital on the night of 9 August 2024, triggering a nationwide uproar among doctors and people.

There have been allegations that evidence was destroyed and attempts were made to downplay the incident in its immediate aftermath. —*PTI*

Iran peace deal & its many conditions

The war launched by the US and Israel on 28 February has rattled the region and virtually shut down oil and natural gas shipments from the Persian Gulf. A fragile ceasefire has been in place since 7 April – AI

The United States and Iran have reached an interim deal aimed at ending the war and reopening the Strait of Hormuz.

There are plans for a signing of the deal on Friday in Switzerland. However, previous announcements fell through, and what the deal contained remained in dispute on Monday.

Iran exchanged fire with the US and Israel last week, threatening to push the region back into a full-scale war. The war launched by the US and Israel on 28 February has rattled the region and virtually shut down oil and natural gas shipments from the Persian Gulf. A fragile ceasefire has been in place since 7 April.

Here's what to know: A 60-day period would address Iran's nuclear programme

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Friday the terms of dealing with Iran's nuclear program would be finalised in the 60 days after the initial agreement is signed and that the parties could decide to extend that period.

The US and Israel fear Iran's nuclear programme could lead to an atomic weapon — a main reason their leaders cited for going to war. Tehran has insisted its nuclear programme is peaceful, though it has enough highly enriched uranium to build several atomic bombs, should it choose to do so.

A senior US administration official, who briefed reporters on condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the White House, said Friday that the emerging agreement would begin the process of destroying or removing Tehran's highly enriched uranium. That's something disputed by Iran, which has insisted it would hold onto its stockpile.

The official said the 60-day period after both sides sign the deal would be used to work out technical details for removing the uranium. The official did not say who the US envisions taking charge of removing the uranium, which is believed to be entombed under three nuclear sites battered by US strikes last year.

The deal may include reopening Strait of Hormuz

The US official said the emerging agreement includes provisions for reopening the strait.

Araghchi said Iran wants a deal that allows Tehran to charge ships "for services rendered" when they transit the strait. Iran charged vessels for passage during the war, which the US and other nations have said violates international law. The strait long has been considered an international water though it sits in the territorial waters of Iran and Oman. Transit through the strait, a vital shipping lane for oil and natural gas, has disrupted global energy supplies, driven up fuel prices and made food and other basics like fertilizer more expensive well beyond the region.

The agreement would include Iranian sanctions relief

Three regional officials said the emerging deal was expected to include the phased lifting of sanctions on Iran and the release of frozen Iranian assets. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the negotiations.

What will happen to Lebanon remains unclear

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said after the deal had been announced that "both sides have declared the immediate and permanent termination of military operations on all fronts, including in Lebanon." It remains unclear whether Israel, which relies on the US but has launched in wars against its enemies since Hamas' 7 October, 2023, attack on Israel, agreed to that term.

Iran has insisted that any deal must include a ceasefire in Lebanon, where Israel has been fighting the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group.

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz warned Friday that Israel could still act independently toward Iran and that the country would not pull out of the zones it is occupying in Lebanon, Syria and Gaza, nor would it withdraw from the northern refugee camps of the Israeli-occupied West Bank. —*PTI*

> **It is vital that all parties seize this opportunity to secure stability and restore freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, which in turn will ease the economic pressures felt by people... around the world. We will now work closely with our partners to support this agreement and to ensure it turns into a durable, lasting peace.**
>
> -Keir Starmer, UK Prime Minister

> **AChina welcomes the US and Iran reaching an agreement on the text of an initial memorandum of understanding. We hope the document will be signed as planned and all relevant parties will stay committed to peaceful solutions and resolve issues through dialogue and negotiation**
>
> -Lin Jian, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson

> **Appreciation for the determination of both the American and Iranian sides and their commitment to moving forward in resolving differences through negotiations and peaceful means**
>
> -Qatar

> **(Lasting peace must) take into consideration the security interests of regional states, sticking to the principle of non-interference in the interior affairs of other countries**
>
> -Saudi Arabia

> **As Türkiye, we will continue to support all efforts aimed at establishing peace, stability, and tranquillity in our region, and to contribute to lasting solutions based on diplomacy and international law**
>
> -Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey President

LETTERS

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SALAR سالار

Water crisis grips Delhi and Marathwada

- Despite rainfall and efforts to get extra water from Haryana, the water situation remains bleak, as DJB reported producing around 960-950 million gallons per day (MGD) of water, which is around 40 MGD less than the summer target of 1,000 MGD

Several parts of the national capital continued to face water shortages, as the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) water productions remains affected, officials said on Monday.

Despite rainfall and efforts to get extra water from Haryana, the water situation remains bleak, as DJB reported producing around 960-950 million gallons per day (MGD) of water, which is around 40 MGD less than the summer target of 1,000 MGD.

"There has been a minor increase in flow in the Yamuna, but the shortfall remains, as the production is around 960 MGD of water. Attempts are being made to improve the water production," a senior DJB officer said.

For nearly a month now, DJB's two major water treatment plants - Wazirabad and Chandrawal - have reduced water production due to low raw water supply, leading to several areas facing problems.

Yamuna level lowers

The level of Yamuna at Wazirabad remains low at around 669.5 feet against the required normal of 674.5 feet.

Till the time the water levels rise to normal levels in the river, the water treatment plants are likely to face low production, he added.

According to government officials, talks are ongoing with the neighbouring Haryana government to increase raw water supply.

"Situation at Chandrawal WTP is improving and the water production might be restored to normalcy in the next two to three days," an official said.

The Wazirabad WTP has an average capacity of producing 131 MGD, while Chandrawal produces 94 MGD on average. A 25-30 per cent reduction in both their capacity has brought down the overall water production of the DJB.

Meanwhile, the DJB has installed an 'Online Water Analyser' in Gulmohar Park area as a pilot project, for real-time monitoring of water quality, DJB vice-chairman Satish Upadhyay said on Monday.

The move follows several complaints from local residents of contaminated water being supplied by the DJB.

"An online water analyser has been installed on a trial basis which will help check any contamination at its source. In one week there will also be facility to send out alerts on mobile phones to residents if there is an increase in TDS, PH levels and related contaminations," Upadhyay further said.

According to the vice-chairman, the analyser has been installed at the Gulmohar Park colony's gate number 2 to monitor any contamination at the start, he added.

Areas affected include Civil Lines, Hindu Rao Hospital, Kamla Nagar, Shakti Nagar, Karol Bagh, Pahar Ganj and NDMC areas and parts of Cantonment and adjoining areas. The DJB has not given a timeline as to when the situation will improve.

Water scarcity in Marathwada

The Marathwada region in Maharashtra is facing a rise in water scarcity, with the number of tankers ferrying water to villages more than doubling in the past month, officials said on Monday.

The tanker-dependent villages in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Jalna, Beed, Parbhani, Nanded, Hingoli, Latur and Dharashiv districts of the region have increased from 119 on 15 May to 244 as of date, according to a report from the divisional commissioner's office.

The number of tankers deployed has surged from 194 to 413, while wells acquired for water supply have jumped from 468 to 1,329 — an increase of 861 in just one month, the report said.

Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar district currently has the highest number of tankers, with 262 ferrying water to 152 villages. Nanded district has acquired the most wells at 319, as per the report.

District-wise tankers are as follows: Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar-262, Jalna-92, Dharashiv-19, Nanded-14, Parbhani-11, Beed-10, Latur-3 and Hingoli-2.

Amid the scarcity, Nanded has seen the acquisition of 319 wells, followed by Beed-214, Dharashiv-208, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar- 197, Latur-151, Jalna-110, Hingoli-66 and Parbhani-64, the report added. —*PTI*

According to government officials in Delhi, talks are ongoing with the neighbouring Haryana government to increase raw water supply – PTI

TMC MP-NCPI tie-up is political calculation to bypass legalities

- When 20 rebel Trinamool Congress Lok Sabha MPs decided to abandon Mamata Banerjee's parliamentary fold, many expected them to take the familiar route travelled by the majority of defectors from various political parties

When 20 rebel Trinamool Congress Lok Sabha MPs decided to abandon Mamata Banerjee's parliamentary fold, many expected them to take the familiar route travelled by the majority of defectors from various political parties across the country over the past decade - join the BJP.

Instead, they chose the Nationalist Citizens Party of India (NCPI), an obscure Tripura-based registered unrecognised political party whose political insignificance may well have been its biggest asset - providing the rebels a legally safer route out of the TMC while allowing the BJP to benefit from their support without immediately inducting them.

The decision of the rebel TMC faction to merge with the NCPI on Sunday may appear puzzling at first, but political observers believe it's a careful move to bypass legalities and, at the same time, make political calculations, underpinning the biggest crisis to have hit the Trinamool Congress since its formation in 1998.

For the rebels, obscurity was not a liability. It was the strategy.

The choice of NCPI appears to offer something the BJP could not - a legally defensible pathway out of the TMC while preserving their collective strength in Parliament.

The rebels' original plan was simpler: walk out of the TMC parliamentary party with two-third MPs, constitute a separate group in Parliament and support the BJP-led NDA, sources said.

But parliamentary rules left little room for such an arrangement. Faced with that legal hurdle, they turned to the NCPI, which offered what a standalone rebel bloc could not: legitimacy.

A senior rebel MP said the decision was driven by "practical considerations rather than ideology".

"We wanted to move collectively and create a political space outside Mamata Banerjee's control without triggering unnecessary procedural hurdles. The NCPI route offered a workable parliamentary solution," he said.

CPI(M) leader Sujan Chakraborty believes the move reflects lessons drawn from the parallel rebellion inside the West Bengal Assembly.

"This is less of a political merger than a legal device," he said, arguing that the Lok Sabha rebels seem keen to avoid the complications that followed the TMC split in the Assembly.

The contrast is striking. In the Assembly, dissident legislators sought to project themselves as the authentic voice of the TMC. They elected their own leader and challenged the authority of the party's official leadership. The result was immediate litigation and competing claims over legitimacy.

The Lok Sabha rebels have consciously stayed away from that battlefield. They are not claiming to be the "real" TMC. Nor are they attempting to seize the party's organisation, symbol or institutional structure.

Instead, they appear to have accepted that the organisational TMC would remain with Mamata Banerjee, while seeking to detach the parliamentary wing from her control.

Senior TMC leader Sougata Roy dismissed the significance of the development, insisting that the party's strength remained intact.

"Some MPs may leave, but the Trinamool Congress belongs to Mamata Banerjee. The organisation, workers and people remain with her. Those who think they can weaken the party by changing labels are mistaken," Roy told PTI.

Unlike many regional parties, the TMC is built around a highly centralised structure. Control over the party machinery, committees, symbol and finances remains firmly anchored in the leadership architecture created around Mamata Banerjee.

For the rebels, therefore, capturing the party may have been an impossible objective. Securing control over a sizeable bloc of MPs was not.

The BJP's role in the unfolding drama is equally revealing. The rebels' consultations have largely revolved around senior BJP leaders, with several key meetings taking place at the residence of Union minister Bhupender Yadav. Yet the BJP has displayed little enthusiasm for an immediate mass induction.

Many among the rebels spent years attacking the BJP and contesting elections against it. While their support in Parliament strengthens the NDA's legislative position, their wholesale induction could create friction within the BJP's West Bengal unit, where local leaders have built their politics in opposition to them.

Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury sees the development as an exercise in parliamentary pragmatism.

"The BJP's immediate interest is numbers in Parliament, not necessarily expanding its organisational family in West Bengal overnight," he said.

Political analysts argue that the NCPI route solved two problems simultaneously - it gave the rebels a vehicle through which they could move collectively without immediately confronting legal complications and allowed the BJP to secure parliamentary support without forcing an awkward political merger in West Bengal.

Unlike previous high-profile exits of Mukul Roy and Suvendu Adhikari that were individual, the latest revolt involves a sizeable bloc of TMC MPs acting collectively, challenging Mamata Banerjee's grip over the party.

Whether the arrangement survives beyond Parliament remains uncertain. But for the rebels, the NCPI's greatest asset was not its strength, influence or electoral appeal. It was the fact that it came with none of these.

In a political season defined by calculations of legality, recognition and survival, obscurity itself became a form of utility. —*PTI*

For TMC rebels, the choice of NCPI appears to offer something the BJP could not - a legally defensible pathway out of the TMC while preserving their collective strength in Parliament – PTI

Congo sees record Ebola cases a month after outbreak

KINSHASA, 15 JUNE

Congo recorded its highest single-day increase in Ebola cases, with 72 new infections, raising the total to 782. The outbreak, caused by the rare Bundibugyo virus, has a fatality rate of 23 per cent, with 181 deaths and 56 recoveries. Weak contact tracing, insecurity, and funding gaps hinder the response, with coverage at only 56 per cent. The outbreak is mainly in Congo's eastern provinces of Ituri, North Kivu, and South Kivu, spreading across borders to Uganda. The UN reports nearly a million displaced people, complicating contact tracing amid ongoing conflict and difficult terrain. The WHO is deploying support to contain the outbreak. —*PTI*

— FB

Norwegian Crown Princess' son gets 4-yr jail for rape

OSLO, 15 JUNE

Marius Borg Hoiby, eldest son of Norway's Crown Princess Mette-Marit, was sentenced to four years in prison Monday after being convicted of rape. He was found guilty of two charges and acquitted of two others. Hoiby, accused of sexually assaulting four women between 2018 and 2024 while they were asleep or unable to resist, also faced lesser charges including assault, drug crimes, and breaching a restraining order. He denied the rape allegations but admitted to some lesser offences. The court's decision follows a high-profile case highlighting issues of consent and accountability. —*PTI*

— FB

Tyra sues Netflix over 'America's Top Model' docu

LOS ANGELES, 15 JUNE

Tyra Banks has filed a defamation lawsuit against Netflix and the creators of the docuseries 'Reality Check: Inside America's Next Top Model'. She alleges that the producers trimmed hours of her interview footage to create a false narrative. Banks claims her three-and-a-half-hour interview was edited down to 16 minutes, manipulated to suggest she knew about a contestant's sexual assault and tried to evade the topic. The lawsuit seeks damages and an injunction against using her image in connection with the soundtrack. Banks states, "The accountability Ms Banks took ended up on the cutting room floor." The series has faced criticism over body shaming and manipulation. —*PTI*

UK Court upholds terror ban on Palestine Action

LONDON, 15 JUNE

The Court of Appeal in London has ruled that the UK government's ban on Palestine Action as a terrorist organisation is lawful. Chief Justice Sue Carr stated the group was not a civil disobedience organisation as claimed, but operated with covert cells targeting property of defence firms and military bases. The ruling overturned a February decision by three High Court judges who argued the group's activities did not justify a ban. The government had outlawed Palestine Action after activists broke into a Royal Air Force base in June 2025 to protest British support for Israel's military offensive against Hamas in Gaza. Since then, 3,300 people have been arrested at protests.—*PTI*

Israel won't withdraw from Lebanon, Syria & Gaza

Don calls Bibi 'difficult guy'; Israel says not bound by US

TEL AVIV, 15 JUNE

Israel has ruled out withdrawing from territories it holds in southern Lebanon despite an interim agreement announced between the United States and Iran, with Defence Minister Israel Katz saying the Israeli military would remain in "security zones" in Lebanon, Syria and Gaza indefinitely.

Katz's remarks mark Israel's first official response to the US-Iran understanding, which is expected to be formally signed in Geneva on Friday. Iran has reportedly linked the agreement to a halt in Israeli attacks on Hezbollah in Lebanon.

"The IDF will remain indefinitely in security zones in Lebanon, Syria and Gaza to protect Israeli citizens," Katz said, adding that Israel had made its opposition to any withdrawal "clear to the US". He warned Tehran against escalating tensions, saying any Iranian attack linked to Lebanon would invite an Israeli response "with full force".

Israeli media reported that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had conveyed the same position directly to US President Donald Trump.

Calling the Israeli prime minister "a very difficult guy," Trump suggested Israel should appreciate the diplomatic breakthrough being pursued by Washington.

National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir insisted Israel was not bound by agreements reached by Washington.

Buildings destroyed in Israeli strikes are seen in a village in southern Lebanon on Monday —*PTI*

"Trump's agreement does not bind us. Israel is not subject to the United States, and we are an independent and sovereign nation," Ben-Gvir wrote on X, arguing that past concessions under international pressure had come at a heavy cost.

He reiterated his demand for the complete dismantling of Hezbollah, opposed any territorial withdrawal and said every drone or missile launched from Lebanon should be met with an Israeli strike on Hezbollah strongholds in Beirut's Dahiya district.

Meanwhile, Israeli security analyst Sagiv Steinberg, chief executive of the Jerusalem Centre for Security and Foreign Affairs, dismissed the US-Iran understanding as "not a peace deal" but "another 60 days of ceasefire".

Speaking to ANI, Steinberg said none of Washington's stated objectives appeared to have been achieved.

He argued the deal left Iran's nuclear programme untouched and would allow Tehran to rebuild its regional proxies, including Hezbollah and the Houthis.

"I don't think it's a good day for West Asia," he said. —*PTI*

LET THE OIL FLOW

"The Deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran is now complete. Congratulations to all! I hereby fully authorise the toll-free opening of the Strait of Hormuz, and, simultaneously herewith, authorise the immediate removal of the United States Naval blockade. Ships of the World, start your engines. Let the oil flow! —Donald Trump, US President

Oil supplies will take months to return to normal: Experts

NEW YORK, 15 JUNE

Global oil and gas supplies are unlikely to return to normal immediately despite the peace agreement announced between the United States and Iran, with energy experts warning that restoring production and shipping could take months.

While oil prices fell after Sunday's announcement, analysts said disruptions caused by months of conflict and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz would continue to weigh on markets.

Brent crude dropped USD 3.45 to USD 83.89 a barrel, while US benchmark crude fell USD 4.03 to USD 80.85. Both, however, remain well above the roughly USD 70 per barrel seen before the war.

Around a fifth of the world's oil and fuel supplies typically pass through the Strait of Hormuz. But ships carrying crude have been stranded in the Persian Gulf for more than three months, and insurers and shipping firms remain cautious.

"It's going to take time for people to feel comfortable and for insurance to be in place," said Daniel Evans of S&P Global Energy.

Analysts noted that oil tankers move slowly and restarting oilfields shut during the conflict is a complex process. Countries such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which have alternative export routes, could recover more quickly.

However, Iraq may take up to a year to restore output fully, experts said, adding that producers would seek assurances that the ceasefire and reopening of the strait are durable before ramping up production. —*PTI*

THE DEALMAKERS

HERE IS A LOOK AT THE KEY PLAYERS BEHIND THE PEACE DEAL

JD Vance

The US VP emerged as a key figure in the US' war cabinet, shaping Washington's negotiating strategy and helping draft the 14-point memorandum. He also led the US delegation during talks with in Islamabad in April.

Steve Witkoff

Trump's special envoy and point man for West Asia led the US negotiating team in back-channel talks with Iran. He worked closely with Pak mediators to bridge the gaps between the two sides.

Jared Kushner

Trump's son-in-law and former senior White House adviser, now serving in an informal role, leveraged his West Asia contacts built during Trump's first term to help facilitate the negotiations.

Abbas Araghchi

Iran's Foreign Minister emerged as one of the most influential voices during the war, steering Iranian ties with global powers, neighbouring states and international institutions while serving as Tehran's chief interlocutor with Pakistan's mediation team.

Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf

The Speaker o Iran's Parliament was Iran's chief negotiator in the first direct talks with the US in decades.

Ishaq Dar

Pakistan's DyPM and FM engaged in talks with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Araghchi. He also was the one to convince Turkey and Qatar for the peace talks.

Shehbaz Sharif

The Prime Minister of Pakistan acted as a lead global mediator, officially making the initial breakthrough in the talks.

Field Marshal Asim Munir

Pakistan's Army Chief played a pivotal role in shaping Islamabad's mediation efforts, the country's most significant diplomatic intervention in decades. His behind-the-scenes engagement with both Washington and Tehran is largely credited with keeping the negotiations alive.

US set to release $12B in frozen Iranian assets

TEHRAN, 15 JUNE

The release of billions of dollars in frozen Iranian assets remains a key sticking point even as the United States and Iran move towards signing a peace agreement in Geneva on Friday.

Iran's Mehr news agency, citing a 14-point memorandum of understanding, reported that Washington has agreed to release USD 24 billion in frozen Iranian assets during a 60-day negotiation period, with half the amount — USD 12 billion — to be made available before talks begin.

However, the US swiftly disputed the claim. A senior US official told Axios that no frozen funds would be released unless Iran first implemented its commitments, describing the arrangement as a "pay-for-performance deal".

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi, quoted by Tasnim news agency, said negotiations on a final agreement would proceed over 60 days provided Washington honoured its pledges, including ending hostilities, lifting the blockade and releasing frozen assets. Iranian media also reported that the deal includes a ceasefire in Lebanon.

The dispute over the assets predates the current negotiations. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent had earlier suggested the funds could compensate Gulf allies for damages caused by future Iranian actions, prompting Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi to warn that using Iranian assets for other countries would violate any agreement. PTI —*ANI*

- Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi, said negotiations on a final agreement would proceed over 60 days provided Washington honoured its pledges.

Pak to host signing ceremony of deal in Switzerland: Shehbaz

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday hailed the US-Iran peace agreement as a "historic milestone" and said Pakistan would host its signing ceremony in Geneva on 19 June. Addressing the National Assembly, Shehbaz said the deal marked the triumph of peace and diplomacy after "three months and 16 days" of conflict. He said Pakistan had played a key mediating role and credited Field Marshal Asim Munir for helping secure the ceasefire.

Shehbaz also thanked political leaders, including Nawaz Sharif, Asif Ali Zardari and Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, for supporting the peace effort.

Trump heads to G7 buoyed by Iran deal

EVIAN-LES-BAINS, 15 JUNE

US President Donald Trump arrived at the G7 summit in the French Alps on Monday riding the momentum of a peace agreement with Iran that he says will end the 15-week conflict that rattled global energy markets.

Trump is expected to discuss reopening and de-mining the Strait of Hormuz with G7 leaders. Britain and France have expressed interest in helping clear the waterway, through which a fifth of global oil supplies normally pass. Tanker traffic has largely halted due to fears of mines and renewed hostilities.

The agreement could ease tensions between Trump and European leaders, including French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who criticised Washington for launching the war without adequate consultation. Macron has invited Egypt, Qatar and the UAE to a West Asia session on Tuesday, where leaders will discuss the implications of the Iran deal, support for Lebanon, reopening the Strait of Hormuz and Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

Questions also remain over the agreement itself. Trump has yet to clarify how Iran's nuclear commitments will be verified, what will happen to its stockpile of highly enriched uranium, and how sanctions relief will differ from the 2015 nuclear deal brokered by former president Barack Obama.

Ukraine is also expected to dominate discussions at the summit. Ahead of his departure, Trump held separate phone calls with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. According to the Kremlin, Trump reiterated his desire to end the war and said he would press European allies and Kyiv towards that goal during the G7.

Zelenskyy, who has been invited by summit host Emmanuel Macron, said he told Trump Ukraine's position on the eastern frontline had improved and that the two leaders agreed to hold further talks on the sidelines of the summit. US envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner are also expected to visit Russia soon. —*PTI*

11 killed in Russia's major aerial assault on Ukraine

KYIV, 15 JUNE

Russia launched one of its largest aerial assaults on Ukraine overnight, firing 70 missiles and 611 drones at Kyiv, Kharkiv, Dnipro and other cities, killing at least 11 people and injuring 53, including two children, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said.

Five people were killed in Kyiv, where apartment blocks, a market and a grocery store were hit. The attacks came a day after Zelenskyy and Russian President Vladimir Putin held separate phone calls with US President Donald Trump.

The overnight bombardment also damaged the UNESCO-listed Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra monastery complex after its Dormition Cathedral caught fire. —*PTI*

SKYDIVING JET CRASHES IN US

A pilot and 11 passengers were killed after a skydiving aircraft crashed moments after take-off from Butler Memorial Airport in western Missouri on Sunday. The single-engine Pacific Aerospace P750, operated by Skydive Kansas City, failed to gain altitude, made a sharp left turn and crashed about 300 yards from the runway. Authorities said there was no evidence that anyone attempted to jump from the aircraft before it went down —*PTI*

'NOT EASY TO IMPOSE'

UK bans social media apps for under 16s

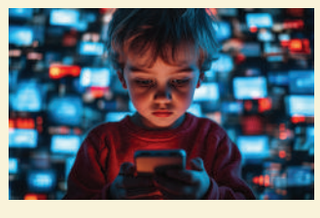
LONDON, 15 JUNE

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Monday announced that social media app access will be banned for all children under the age of 16 for their "happiness and safety".

In an address from 10 Downing Street in London, Starmer said it was the right choice both as Prime Minister and as a father of young children.

He admitted that it will not be easy to impose such a ban involving some of the most powerful tech companies in the world, but the health and well-being of children were paramount.

The announcement followed a lengthy consultation process fed into by campaigners, including parents, whose children have been impacted by the harmful effects of social media apps such as TikTok,



Snapchat, Instagram and YouTube. Legislative powers had been put in place for the law to come into force by Spring next year.

While messaging apps such as WhatsApp will not be included in the ban, gaming services and live streaming platforms where strangers can contact children unchecked will be restricted through an age verification system yet to be finalised.

The UK's action comes after Australia became the first country in the world to introduce a similar ban in December last year. —*PTI*

N-able opens B'luru GCC as part of India expansion

BENGALURU, 15 JUNE

Cybersecurity firm N-able announced the launch of its first Global Capability Centre (GCC) in Bengaluru, marking its entry into the Indian market. The New York Stock Exchange-listed company currently employs around 140 staff at the new facility, with plans to increase the workforce by 50 per cent by year-end. The strategic investment aims to enhance its AI-driven capabilities and support small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) in strengthening cyber resilience and compliance readiness. John Pagliuca, CEO of N-able, stated that opening the Bengaluru office is a vital step, as India plays a critical role in addressing cyber risks and operational complexity for global organisations. Headquartered in Burlington, Massachusetts, N-able considers India one of the world's fastest-growing cybersecurity markets. —*PTI*

Starbucks Korea employees get history lesson

SEOUL, 15 JUNE

Starbucks South Korea will close all its stores early on 22 June for mandatory history and social sensitivity training following backlash over a controversial marketing campaign. Shinsegae Group, which owns 67.5 per cent of Starbucks Korea, said executives and employees at headquarters will attend training led by history and sociology professors. All stores will close at 3pm. so staff can watch a recording of the session. The campaign promoted stainless-steel tumblers called "SS Tank," referencing 18 May, Gwangju's pro-democracy uprising anniversary, which was violently suppressed in 1980. The slogan "Thwack it on the table!" was seen as a reference to a police statement covering up a student activist's death. Shinsegae fired the chief executive, and Chairman Chung Yong-jin issued an apology. —*PTI*

Rupee rises 47P to settle at 94.71 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 15 JUNE

The rupee rose 47 paise to settle at 94.71 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday as global crude oil prices dropped sharply after US President Donald Trump announced that the US and Iran finalised a deal to end the war. A surge in the domestic equity markets and a weaker US dollar further drove the local unit, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 94.70 against the US dollar and traded in the range of 94.45-94.77. Eventually, it settled at 94.71 (provisional), up 47 paise from its previous close. The rupee jumped 67 paise to close at 95.18 against the greenback on Friday. —*PTI*

Gold up Rs 2,500 to Rs 1.59 lakh per 10 grams

MUMBAI, 15 JUNE

Gold prices surged by Rs 2,500 to Rs 1.59 lakh per 10 grams in the capital, while silver climbed to Rs 2.60 lakh per kg, driven by strong global trends following the US and Iran's peace deal framework. The yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity increased from Rs 1,56,900 on Friday, and silver rose for the second consecutive session, up Rs 5,000. Analysts said the uptrend was supported by the agreement to end hostilities and reopen the Strait of Hormuz, reducing inflation fears and lowering the likelihood of aggressive monetary policy. International spot gold rose nearly 3 per cent to USD 4,340.65 per ounce, with silver up 4.04 per cent to USD 70.74. —*PTI*

We need more measures to draw in foreign funds: FM

'Tax cuts for foreign investors was only the first step'

NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday signalled that more measures to attract foreign capital into Indian markets are in the pipeline.

Speaking at the Hero Mindmine Summit 2026 in New Delhi, Sitharaman said the government's recent decision to exempt withholding tax on interest income and capital gains tax on foreign investor holdings in government securities was only the first step.

"Certainly, that's not the end of story, there will be more. We recognise we need more foreign capital to come in," she said.

On 5 June, the RBI allowed banks to access its swap facility for Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank) deposits with maturities of three to five years until 30 September, enabling them to swap US dollar deposits with the central bank and manage currency risk.

A concessional forex swap facility has also been introduced to encourage public sector undertakings to raise external commercial borrowings by the same deadline.

Sitharaman said that under the RBI's framework, the cost of currency hedging will be borne by the central bank, freeing banks to raise funds without exchange rate constraints.

"As a result, the banks can now go unfettered to raise their own fund. So we have taken a very calibrated approach to make sure that the markets do see the required investments," she said.

The finance minister also flagged that the Indian economy is under "severe strain" from the import of key raw materials, including crude oil and fertilisers, and cautioned that the rapidly shifting global situation demands preparedness for fresh challenges each week. —*PTI*

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at the Mindmine Summit 2026 in New Delhi on Monday –*PTI*

- Speaking at the Hero Mindmine Summit 2026 in New Delhi, Sitharaman said the government's recent decision to exempt interest income and capital gains tax on foreign investor holdings in government securities was only the first step. "Certainly, that's not the end of the story, there will be more," she said.

SENSEX UP 736 POINTS

Markets soar as US-Iran deal lowers oil prices

NEW DELHI/ MUMBAI, 15 JUNE

Stock markets rose for the second straight session with BSE Sensex closing higher by 736 points on Monday, driven by a rally in global equities and a sharp reduction in crude oil prices in view of the US-Iran deal to end their 107-day war.

Sensex jumped 736.38 points (+0.97 per cent), closing at 76,264.33. During the day, it zoomed 1,293.12 points (+1.71 per cent), hitting an intraday high of 76,821.07. Nifty surged 231 points (+0.98 per cent) to end at 23,853.90. During the day, the benchmark rallied 388.5 points (+1.64 per cent) to 24,011.40.

US President Donald Trump announced on Truth Social that the US and Iran have agreed to end war and reopen the Strait of Hormuz, a move expected to provide significant relief to India by securing oil supplies.

Crude oil prices fell to three-month lows in global markets after the announcement. Brent Crude dropped 4.55–5 per cent to trade near USD 83–82.90 per barrel.

This sharp decline in global crude oil prices triggered a widespread rally across key oil-dependent sectors on the BSE, led by significant gains in aviation, oil marketing, and paint manufacturing stocks.

"The easing of geopolitical tensions following the US-Iran peace agreement is a significant positive for global risk assets." Rajesh Palviya, Head of Research, Axis Direct, said.

"The correction in crude oil prices is particularly encouraging for an import-dependent economy like India, as it helps alleviate inflationary pressures, improves macroeconomic stability, and provides greater policy flexibility," he added. —*PTI*

Adani, Jabil tie-up to make AI data centre hardware

NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

Adani Group and US-based electronics manufacturer Jabil Inc on Monday announced plans to form a strategic alliance to build a large-scale artificial intelligence (AI) and data centre infrastructure manufacturing platform in India. The joint venture targets both domestic demand and global exports.

The partnership aims to manufacture high-density AI racks, servers, storage systems, networking equipment and supporting power and cooling infrastructure.

In a statement, Adani Enterprises and Jabil said the platform would target multi-gigawatt AI rack manufacturing capacity and cater to hyperscale cloud providers, colocation operators and enterprise global data centres.

The platform will also produce key data centre components including power distribution units.

The announcement comes as India ramps up investments in digital infrastructure, with industry estimates projecting domestic data centre capacity to reach 5-8 gigawatts by 2030.

The venture aligns with Adani's previous USD 100 billion commitment to develop 5 GW of green energy-powered, AI data centres by 2035. —*PTI*

LISTED ON BSE & NSE

Vedanta's four demerged firms go public

NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

Four of Vedanta Group's demerged entities — Vedanta Aluminium Metal, Vedanta Power, Vedanta Oil and Gas, and Vedanta Iron and Steel — debuted on the BSE and NSE on Monday.

Vedanta Aluminium Metal shares opened at Rs 527 on the BSE, hitting a high of Rs 538. On the NSE, it is listed at Rs 522. The market capitalisation stood at Rs 1,95,773.58 crore on the BSE.

Vedanta Power shares listed at Rs 41.30 on the BSE and climbed to Rs 43.35, making it the only demerged entity to hold gains through the session. On the NSE, the stock opened at Rs 41.80. Its market cap stood at Rs 16,736.46 crore on the BSE.

Vedanta Oil and Gas shares opened at Rs 39 on the BSE, reaching a high of Rs 40.95. On the NSE, the stock is listed at Rs 38. The company's market capitalisation was Rs 14,487.99 crore on the BSE.

Vedanta Iron and Steel shares are listed at Rs 22.25 on the BSE and Rs 20 on the NSE. Its market cap stood at Rs 8,231.37 crore on the BSE.

The demerger, approved by the National Company Law Tribunal in December last year on a 1:1 basis, gives shareholders one share in each new entity for every Vedanta share held. —*PTI*

LISTING PRICE

	BSE	NSE
Vedanta Aluminium Metal	₹527	₹522
Vedanta Power	₹41.30	₹41.8
Vedanta Oil and Gas	₹39	₹38
Vedanta Iron and Steel	₹22.25	₹20

VEDANTA ENVISIONS $100B BIZ, RELISTING

MUMBAI, 15 JUNE

Vedanta Group Chairman Anil Agarwal on Monday hinted at a possible overseas relisting of parent Vedanta Resources.

According to Agarwal, Vedanta Resources may relist on an international exchange—such as in the United States—within the next three years.

The company was previously taken private when Agarwal bought out its remaining shares, following its 2018 delisting from the London Stock Exchange. Agarwal has previously stated that the buy-out of the London listing was intended to simplify the company's structure.

He further claimed that each vertical business has the potential to become a USD 100 billion opportunity over time as the group scales up operations in metals, mining, oil and gas, power and critical minerals.

He highlighted that the group is currently reporting revenue of USD 23-24 billion and aims to take it to USD 50 billion. —*PTI*

May import rise widens trade deficit

NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

Despite significant growth in exports, India's trade deficit widened in May 2026 due to a sharper rise in imports, according to estimated trade data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Overall trade, combining merchandise and services, saw exports rise to USD 81.96 billion in May 2026 from USD 70.76 billion in May 2025, marking double-digit growth.

However, imports grew faster, climbing to USD 92.47 billion from USD 77.55 billion a year ago. As a result, the trade deficit widened to USD 10.51 billion in May 2026, up from USD 6.79 billion in May 2025.

Merchandise exports touched a new record high of USD 45.20 billion in May 2026, compared to USD 38.30 billion in the same month last year. The figure was highlighted as a "new record high of monthly Merchandise Export @US$ 45.20 billion" in the data released by the ministry.

However, merchandise imports also jumped sharply to USD 73.41 billion from USD 60.86 billion in May 2025. The faster increase in imports meant the goods trade gap remained a key driver of the overall deficit. —*ANI*

BHARTI AIRTEL APPROVES RAISING STAKE IN AFRICA ARM

NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

Bharti Airtel on Monday said it received around 100 per cent shareholder approval to raise its stake in Airtel Africa by 16.31 per cent through a share-swap agreement worth Rs 28,220 crore.

Following the transaction, Bharti Airtel's stake in Airtel Africa will rose to around 79 per cent from 62.73 per cent.

The transaction involves Bharti Airtel issuing equity shares to Indian Continent Investment Limited, a promoter group entity, on a preferential basis, in exchange for its 16.31 per cent stake in Airtel Africa.

The transaction, being a cashless share-swap, presents an opportunity to the Company to acquire a large block and increase its economic interest in a high-growth asset without any incremental leverage or cash outflow, a company statement said.

"Airtel Africa is central to our growth strategy and is well positioned to deliver robust performance with an increasing contribution to our consolidated revenues," Bharti Enterprises Founder and Chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal said.

"As we look ahead, we see significant potential in Africa for shareholder value creation," Mittal added. —*PTI*

DRONE USE TO RISE 55%: STUDY

NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

Use of drones in logistics and clean tech sectors is expected to surge 55 per cent in three years.

The Indian logistics market expanding from USD 228 billion in 2024 to USD 428.7 billion in 2033, said Nexgen Exhibitions (NEPL).

A survey was conducted among drone manufacturers, logistics experts, solar & wind manufacturers, power distributers and tech providers in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bengaluru, and Pune.

Around 38 per cent of respondents cited security and logistics as the primary driver for drone adoption, while 27 per cent cited the need for faster, clean logistics solutions.

Over half said the adoption trend will accelerate. —*PTI*

Razorpay confidentially files for Rs 6,000 cr IPO

NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

Fintech company Razorpay has confidentially submitted draft documents to the markets regulator, SEBI, for an Initial Public Offering (IPO), with the issue size estimated between Rs 5,000-6,000 crore, according to sources.

In a public notice, the firm stated it has filed "the pre-filed draft red herring prospectus with SEBI and the stock exchanges... regarding the proposed IPO of its equity shares on the main board." The company did not specify the issue size.

Founded in 2014 by Harshil Mathur and Shashank Kumar, Razorpay offers payment acceptance, banking, payouts, payroll, lending, and other financial services. Razorpay got unicorn status in 2020 and has since expanded into a broader financial ecosystem.

Backed by Peak XV Partners, GIC, Tiger Global, Ribbit Capital, Lone Pine Capital, Alkeon Capital, and TCV, the final IPO size and timing depend on regulatory approvals and market conditions.

The confidential route allows companies to review draft documents without immediate public disclosure. —*PTI*

LNG CARRIER DISHA

Indian LNG carrier safely crosses Hormuz

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

A Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) carrier, chartered by an Indian firm, safely transited through the Strait of Hormuz - the first Indian LNG tanker to cross the war-hit narrow shipping lane since the war in West Asia broke out more than three and a half months back.

LNG Carrier Disha, managed by a Shipping Corporation of India-led consortium and chartered by Petronet LNG Ltd, is also one of the first commercial vessels to transit the Strait since the announcement of a preliminary ceasefire deal between the United States and Iran.

The vessel is to arrive at Dahej in Gujarat - the flagship import terminal of Petronet - on 18 June, said Upesh Kumar Sharma, Director in the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.

India's 'Disha' carrier is among the highest used LNG ships –*PETRONET*

Disha is carrying 62,370 tonnes of LNG.

India meets about half of its natural gas demand through imports of LNG, with roughly 65 per cent sourced from Gulf producers such as Qatar and shipped via Strait of Hormuz.

Disha was among the ships stranded in the Strait during the conflict before resuming its voyage to India.

Sharma said 15 vessels - comprising 10 Indian-flagged ships and five foreign-flagged vessels - have safely crossed the strategic waterway so far.

Sharma said around 18,000 Indian seafarers are currently employed across the Gulf region, while more than 3,500 seafarers have been safely repatriated so far.

About 325 Indian seafarers are serving on Indian-flagged vessels operating west of the Strait of Hormuz, while 13 Indian ships are deployed in that area. —*PTI*

USTR to visit India on 22 June for trade talks

NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

US Trade Representative (USTR) **Jamieson Greer** is set to visit India in late June. He will arrive on June 22 in New Delhi and will hold talks with commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on 23 June and the first half of 24 June before leaving for the US later that day, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said on Monday.

Agrawal welcomed the US-Iran peace agreement, expressing hope it will bring lasting stability to West Asia, even as India recorded strong monthly export performance. While releasing the May 2026 trade data, Agrawal said India was closely watching developments between the US and Iran and hoped the deal would stand the test of time.

"During the visit, the teams held constructive and positive discussions across a wide range of issues covering Trade in Goods, Non-Tariff Measures, Customs and Trade Facilitation, Economic Security Alignment and other areas of mutual interest," an official release had said at the time.

India's exports rose by 18 per cent to USD 45.2 billion in May. Notably, overall exports have nearly doubling over the last 12 years. —*ANI*

Iran captain Mehdi Taremi

War puts a dampener on Iran's World Cup experience

INGLEWOOD, 15 JUNE

Iran captain Mehdi Taremi says his team is having a challenging World Cup experience amid the multi-fold disruptions created by their nation's war with the US, the tournament's co-host.

The Iranians arrived in the Los Angeles area on Sunday from their training base in Tijuana, Mexico, just over the US border — about 140 miles (225 kilometers) from the stadium where they will open group-stage play against New Zealand on Monday night. Iran's training camp was relocated from the US after the war began, and the Iranian team has endured numerous distractions since then, including visa problems.

"I have felt the tension from the first moment we arrived at this World Cup," Taremi said. "At any tournament when there is tension, we won't have the same beautiful experience we always talk about with peace and joy. ... I know it wasn't just us. I know several countries had visa problems and changes with training camps. Before we arrived, the feeling, the sensation people always have, how they look forward to the World Cup, I think this time maybe they haven't had the same feeling."

> **I have felt the tension from the first moment we arrived at this World Cup**
> —Mehdi Taremi, FIFA Iran Captain

"This kind of tension, it undermines that joy and it undermines the message of FIFA and our people, which is that football brings about peace," said Taremi, the 33-year-old Olympiacos striker who is playing in his third World Cup. "I feel like this World Cup could have provided a better atmosphere than it has, but I hope in the future it will be better for all fans, whatever team they are supporting in the World Cup."

Iran initially planned to train in Tucson, Arizona, before the war's outbreak, but quickly moved to Baja California. FIFA then rejected Iran's desire to play its group-stage World Cup matches outside the US, claiming logistics and contracts wouldn't allow it.

Iran has been beset with logistical problems since then, including the denial of visas for certain members of its delegation. A team spokesperson said Sunday that two members of its media relations group were denied US visas for the opening match. Iran and its traveling fans also have faced multiple issues with match tickets. —*PTI*

Havertz sparks Germany's 7-1 rout of Curaçao

HOUSTON, 15 JUNE

Kai Havertz scored two goals as Germany pulled away from World Cup first-timer Curaçao late in the opening half and piled on after that in a 7-1 win on Sunday in a group match.

Livano Comenencia tied it at 1-1 with his left-footed shot through traffic from the center of the box in the 21st minute to give Curaçao its first goal in the tournament and send fans of the tiny Caribbean nation into a frenzy.

It was all Germany after that with the four-time champions regaining the lead on Nico Schlotterbeck's header off Nathaniel Brown's corner kick in the 38th minute.

The margin of victory comes well short of the World Cup record of nine goals which has happened three times, with the last one coming when Hungary beat El Salvador 10-1 in 1982. It was a strong start for Germany against underdog Curaçao as the team seeks redemption after failing to get out of the group stage in Russia and Qatar following its 2014 title.

The match also featured the largest age gap between coaches in World Cup history with Curaçao's 78-year-old coach Dick Advocaat becoming the oldest ever in the tournament against 38-year-old Julian Nagelsmann, who is the youngest coach in this year's tournament.

Germany faces Ivory Coast in its next match in Toronto on Saturday and Curaçao meets Ecuador Saturday in Kansas City. —

Ivory Coast took a step to reaching the knockout stage for the first time

Last minute goal lifts Ivory Coast past Ecuador

In its first World Cup in years, Amad Diallo gives Ivory Coast the edge

PHILADELPHIA, 15 JUNE

Amad Diallo scored in the 90th minute to lift Ivory Coast to a 1-0 victory over Ecuador in its first World Cup appearance in a dozen years.

The teams combined to hit the crossbar three times before the Manchester United winger — who entered as a substitute in the 56th minute — broke through with a left-footed shot from just inside the penalty area that beat diving goalkeeper Hernán Galíndez. Wilfried Singo set up the goal with a strong run down the right side.

Making its fourth appearance in the World Cup and first since 2014, Ivory Coast took a step toward reaching the knockout stage for the first time. Ecuador saw its 19-game unbeaten streak end with its first loss since a 1-0 decision against Brazil on 6 September 2024.

Elye Wahi hit the crossbar in the 52nd minute for Ivory Coast after Ecuador's John Yeboah and Nilson Angulo did the same in the opening half.

Ecuador, making its fifth World Cup appearance and looking to reach the knockout round for the second time, was playing a virtual home game at Lincoln Financial Field, with most of the capacity crowd of 68,274 wearing the yellow jerseys of La Tri.

Ecuador looked strong before Diallo's goal. Its best chance after halftime came in the 68th minute on Gonzalo Plata's hard shot from about 25 yards out that was parried away by goalkeeper Yahia Fofana.

Ivory Coast was bolstered by the forward play of Yan Diomande. The Leipzig attacker created several scoring chances, particularly down the right side. That included Wahi's near goal on a flick following Diomande's hard cross.

Ivory Coast, which did not concede a goal while going 8-0-2 in 10 qualifying matches, will next face four-time World Cup champion Germany, which defeated Curacao 7-1 earlier on Sunday in Group E. Ecuador will meet Curacao. Both matches will be played 20 June. —*PTI*

Japan draws 2-2 with Netherlands in WC opener

ARLINGTON, 15 JUNE

Daichi Kamada and his Japanese teammates were minutes away from a World Cup -opening loss that wouldn't have been unexpected considering the opponent.

His tying goal will be remembered for a long time in his homeland, especially if the country with some soccer momentum reaches the round of 16 again.

Kamada scored on a header off Koki Ogawa's corner kick in the 88th minute, sending the Samurai Blue fans into a frenzy and giving Japan a 2-2 draw with the higher-ranked Netherlands on Sunday.

While the Dutch extended their unbeaten streak to 17 games in group play, the orange-clad Oranje supporters were stunned by the late goal that left them at 21-2-11 in group play at the World Cup.

"Our players managed to be tenacious but at the same time be patient and just keep calm and finding and seizing an opportunity," Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu said through an interpreter. His team reached the round of 16 for the fourth time in 2022 in Qatar.

The Dutch's most recent loss before the elimination round came the last time the World Cup was in the United States in 1994, when a group play defeat was followed by a quarterfinal loss to Brazil at the Cotton Bowl in Dallas.

The pressure is always on the Netherlands to reach the elimination round, in part because it's the only country to reach the final three times without winning the World Cup. —*PTI*

Japan celebrates after drawing with Netherlands —*ANI*

2 goals from Yasin Ayari help Sweden pound Tunisia 5-1

MONTERREY, 15 JUNE

Yasin Ayari scored twice and Sweden showed it belonged at the 2026 World Cup, pounding Tunisia 5-1 to move atop Group F.

Alexander Isak and Viktor Gyökeres each had a goal and an assist, and Mattias Svanberg also scored for Sweden, which entered ranked 39th in the world and missed the 2022 World Cup after reaching the quarterfinals eight years ago in Russia.

Omar Rekik scored for 45th-ranked Tunisia, which is playing in its seventh World Cup but has never advanced beyond the group stage.

Ayari bookended the scoring for the Swedes at Estadio BBVA with long-range goals in the seventh minute and in second-half stoppage time. He was muted in his celebration of the first goal, raising his hands out of respect for the country where his father was born.

Svanberg scored in the 84th minute, a goal awarded after a lengthy video review.

Sweden will play the Netherlands at Houston on Saturday, while Tunisia will remain in Monterrey and face Japan. —*PTI*

WI beat Lanka by 5 wkts to win T20 series

Jason Holder scored an unbeaten 21 runs off 5 balls to lead the team to victory. —*FB*

KINGSTON, 15 JUNE

Sherfane Rutherford reached his half-century in the last over of a dramatic run chase as West Indies completed a series-clinching five-wicket win with two deliveries to spare in the third Twenty20 international against Sri Lanka.

Rutherford was unbeaten on 54 from 40 deliveries and Jason Holder clobbered three sixes in the penultimate over, finishing 21 not out, off five balls as West Indies reached 170-5 in reply to Sri Lanka's 169.

Two costly missed catches during Rutherford's innings hurt Sri Lanka's chances of taking the series after the first two games were split.

West Indies went into the deciding game with an attacking focus, deciding to bowl first after winning the toss.

Shamar Joseph (5-33) backed up the decision by snaring five wickets to contain Sri Lanka's innings in a player-of-the-match performance.

The hosts chased down a target of 170 with just two balls to spare —*x*

West Indies won the first T20 by seven wickets and Sri Lanka won the second by 37 runs on Saturday, leaving the series in the balance.

After losing Shai Hope on the third delivery of the run chase, bowled by Wellalage, West Indies raced to 52 before losing three wickets for one run in a 12-ball span that swung momentum back in Sri Lanka's favor.

Rovman Powell (33) combined with Rutherford to revive the run chase, putting on 81 for the fifth wicket until he was dismissed on the last ball of an eventful 17th over.

The over from pace bowler Dushmantha Chameera contained nine deliveries — including a no-ball and two wides — and netted 24 runs for West Indies and the wicket of Powell.

It left West Indies needing 36 runs from three overs. The equation got down to 29 required from two overs. Holder clouted Chameera for three sixes in four deliveries to end the 19th and leave West Indies needing six runs for victory.

Sri Lanka won the preceding — and soggy — three-match ODI series 1-0 after the final two matches were rained out. Sri Lanka won the first match by 41 runs.

The teams will meet in a two-test series starting 25 June in Antigua. —*PTI*

Goa to host 350 players at 5th Asia Cup Bridge C'ship

PANAJI, 15 JUNE

Around 350 bridge players from 16 countries across the Asia-Oceania region will compete for top honours at the 5th Asia Cup Bridge Championship, to be held here from 21 to 27 June. Bridge Federation of India (BFI) President Prasad Keni said Goa would be hosting the quadrennial event for the second time, having previously staged it in 2018. BFI Secretary Debasish Ray said participating nations include Australia, China, Indonesia, Bangladesh, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Hong Kong China, Japan, Chinese Taipei, the Philippines, Malaysia, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand and hosts India. Ray said Pakistan had expressed interest in participating but did not submit its entry. —*PTI*

SURYANSH, VIPRAJ FIFTIES TAKE INDIA A TO 265 VS SL A

DAMBULLA, 15 JUNE

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi once again got out after a flying start but spin bowling all-rounders Suryansh Shedge and Vipraj Nigam hit timely fifties to fish India A out of troubled waters as the visitors scored 265 against Sri Lanka A in a tri-nation series game here on Monday.

Shedge smashed 72 off 66 balls while Nigam contributed 51 off 49 balls to rescue India.

Sooryavanshi (21 off 14 balls) started by smashing pacer Chamika Gunasekara for a six and couple of boundaries but off-spinner Sahan Arachchige got one to slightly drift wide of his hitting arc and the southpaw hit across the line to spoon it towards point.

Skipper Tilak Varma (23) and his deputy Ruturaj Gaikwad (32) added 52 for the third wicket in 9 overs but the Sri Lankan spinners made a comeback on a slowish track.

From 91 for 2, a middle-order slump had India tottering at 143 for 7 once off-spinner Vijaykanth Viyaskanth beat Gaikwad with an off-break to trap him plumb in-front.

Tilak was dismissed when he tried to smash slinger Kugathas Mathulan through point only to be caught by the fielder stationed there. However, Mumbai's Shedge and UP's Nigam - two multi-skilled players, who are on national selectors' 'targeted list' added 104 runs for the eighth wicket. —*PTI*

India rally to beat USA 3-2 in Nations Cup

AUCKLAND, 15 JUNE

The Indian women's hockey team staged a remarkable comeback to clinch a 3-2 win over the USA in its opening Pool A match of the FIH Nations Cup here on Monday.

Deepika netted a brace while Navneet Kaur also scored. Ashley Sessa and Madeleine Zimmer were on the score-sheet for the USA. The winner of the Nations Cup will be promoted to the elite Pro league, from which India were relegated last season.

The USA got off to a great start and opened the scoring through Ashley, who found the back of the net with a field goal in the 4th minute.

The Americans doubled their advantage just three minutes later when Madeleine Zimmer (7') converted a penalty corner to put India under pressure. Trailing by two goals, India gradually began to assert themselves in attack.

Their efforts paid off in the second quarter when drag-flick specialist Deepika (17') converted a penalty corner to reduce the deficit and bring India back into the game.

The momentum continued to shift in India's favour as they earned another penalty corner. India completed a stunning turnaround before half-time.

Both sides earned six penalty corners each over the course of the match, but neither defence allowed any further breakthroughs in the remaining two quarters.

Following the victory, India moved to second place in Pool A with three points, level with Japan, who lead the standings on goal difference. —*PTI*